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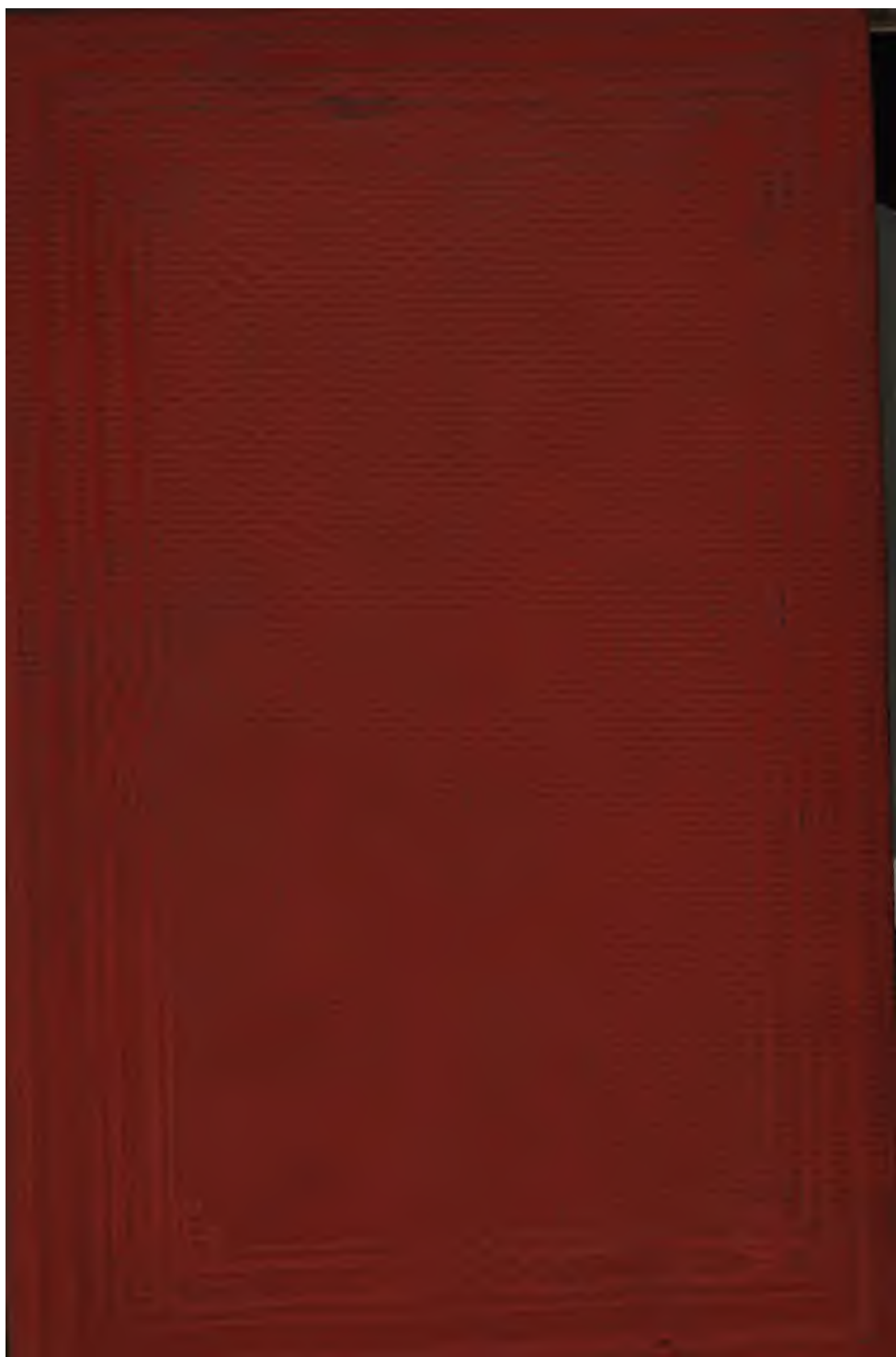
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ICE BOUND.

BY

WALTER THORNBURY,

AUTHOR OF

"BRITISH ARTISTS FROM HOGARTH TO TURNER,"

"EVERY MAN HIS OWN TRUMPETER,"

ETC., ETC.

"Thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice."

Measure for Measure.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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LONDON:
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REGENT'S PARK.

ICE BOUND.

THE MINER'S TALE.

FOUNDED ON A TRADITION CURRENT AMONG THE
MINERS OF CAERNARVONSHIRE.

A WEARY man was Griffith Owen ; sick at heart and sore of foot. Long seemed the mountain way, and heavy the load of glittering trinkets and rustic finery in his ponderous pack. Many a steep mile had Griffith, the sturdy pedlar, plodded since the sunrise ; at many an inn had he in vain displayed his tempting wares ; many a cottage had he fruitlessly visited. The times were bad ; for war, like the Arab

wind of death, had swept over England, the angel of destruction had visited alike noble's tower and peasant's hut, nor had stayed his hand even at the "lintel dashed with blood."

Hard times they were, and the flames of civil war glowed over the land ; brother fought against brother, and armies more terrible than those of the stranger,

Like the wind's blast, never resting, homeless,
Stormed o'er the war-convulsed earth.

Hard times for the peasant, for what the Cavalier trooper spared, the Ironside bore off ; and the mountaineer, who to-day might be playing the humble but generous host to some Royalist officers in his poor home, was to-morrow, perhaps, on his way, as a branded malignant, to a bloody grave in the courtyard of the nearest Puritan fortress.

What broad pieces had village lovers now to waste on pedlars' gewgaws, when half their hard-won earnings went to swell the forced loan of some parliamentary

commissioner, who had all the power of an Eastern despot without his attempering mercy? What heart had pale-cheeked maidens for gaudy love-knots and gay tirings, when they were either cowering by their father's hearth, spinning by firelight in the barred-up cottage, listening to some panic-stricken messenger from the nearest town, or, mayhap, stealing out in the twilight to drive home the now almost wild sheep from the rock-strewn mountain side?

The Royalist cause, at the time of the great civil war, of which we now write, was at its lowest ebb. Monk, the sturdy wielder of the dead giant's sword, had overawed with it those who already longed for the restoration. Those beautiful valleys of Caernarvonshire, of which I write, had rung already with the din of fire-arms; long since had those mountains, on which Owen gazed now as he had done when an infant, given back the echoes of death as

if with the reverberations of a spirit's voice, and with them, those sounds no less terrible, the execrations and the maddened cries of struggling men. Old towers built by great chiefs, whose names were still current in the country side, in the song and legend of the mountaineer and the dalesman, had fallen under the iron hand of Cromwell—last relics, glass statues of an expired feudalism, shattered by the genius of democratic fanaticism—and their fall, like the last throbs of a strong man dying, had shaken the land as with an earthquake. Castles, which the peasant who lived near them had been accustomed to consider as eternal as the mountains, those tombstones of former worlds which towered above them—had passed from the scene like the clouds with which their turrets had so long held dark communion. The old rock nests had been pulled down, the birds had flown, the proud descendants of the Cambrian kings—once the glory

of the valleys beneath — were wanderers now, ay, and even beggars in a foreign land.

An unnatural lull had followed the storm thunders, for in these distant and lonely valleys of Merionethshire, where our scene lies, the stray broad sheet of the day had not reached for weeks. But now and then some passing traveller brought word to the anxious listeners at the village inn, that Monk was ruling with a rod of iron, that plots were hatched but to be discovered, and that the Royalists crept to their hiding-places like birds of night at the approach of day, at which news the Royalist shrugged his shoulders, bit his lips, swore an oath or two in his sleeve, and preserved a very prudent silence, while the Puritan smiled grimly, and uttered, with due twang and emphasis, some text adapted to the occasion.

How could Owen, then, sell his gay treasures in times like these, when the

sour fathers of village maidens thought silken ringlets hooks of the great tempter, and the ribands that adorned them the very snares of Apollyon himself?

It was almost evening—a summer evening—when our friend the pedlar turned from the great road that leads from the eagle-towered city of Caernarvon into the heart of Merionethshire, and trudged away over a steep mountain-path in the direction of Drws y Coed, “the door of the wood,” a pass formed by the great granite roots of Snowdon, that stretch forth like the feelers of some giant monster frozen to stone—a spot which, as its name and the legends appertaining thereto indicate, was once covered by dense forests, the haunt of the boar, the deer, and the wolf, where the Welsh kings hunted animals scarce less savage than themselves. In the western sky, “night’s great pageant” had commenced; in the horizon, was streaming up a red light as of some burn-

ing town, the fainter reflection of which, fainter and calmer as of a dawn before its time, lit the peaks of the eastern mountains, suffusing them with a rosy light, as if the internal fire of a volcano was shining through its stony casket, rendered transparent by some spirit of a bygone religion that still haunted its summit.

On strode manfully the pedlar; encumbered as he was with his heavy pack, he clambered over jutting masses of rock, keeping his eye fixed on the ground, to trace out the ill-defined path which led from one hamlet to another; but one mile led but to another steeper than the last, and still no village in sight. In vain he gazed below on the lakes, as if to see if any cottage was mirrored in those clear depths which now glowed in the purple light, reflecting the transitory splendours so unearthly and so sublime. Wending at last to a small defile that was hemmed in by rocks which seemed to forbid an exit, the weary

man, with an expression of impatience, threw his pack on the ground, placed his pedlar's staff beside it, and first leaning against a mass of lichen rock, finally seated himself upon it, and gradually yielding unconditionally to the overpowering influence of fatigue that overcame him, threw himself at full length upon the ground, resting his head upon the load that had so grievously galled his shoulder. While he thus tarries, reader, let us sketch our friend Griffith more minutely. A broad-leaved hat shadowed a good-looking face, whose regular features bore an expression at once of shrewdness and generosity; neglect, eccentricity, or a wish for disguise, not unlikely in those troublous times, had led him to nourish a beard of formidable length, which, mingling with the hair of the upper lip, gave the wearer so wild and perhaps so savage an appearance, that a passer-by, forgetful of the conventional form of dress, might have imagined him a British chief rest-

ing after the toils of the chase. "Strange," he muttered half aloud, as he lay with his eyes closed, "that a mountaineer should lose his way in a spot as familiar to him as the chambers of his father's house ; but my thoughts have been lately wandering far from hence, and Alps and Apennines are blended with Snowdon and Plinlimmon in my recollections. God help me ! Would I were well housed ; for the night draws on, and my bones are as yet too well cased to feed the mountain hawk. A shame on these aching limbs ! will toil never season them ?" he said with a sigh, as he raised himself, and was about to once more shoulder his pack and resume his toilsome walk. A sharp, deep, rolling sound of thunder burst suddenly from the very rock against which he had but the moment before been leaning, while a thick vapour and a strong sulphurous smell filled the air. The pedlar looked back as if he had heard God speaking from the clouds, the mountain-top overhead gave back its last faint ray, as if

reflecting the glare of some red storm. The pedlar's eye wandered as the vapour passed away over the storm-tinted rocks from whence the sound had come, and saw that, from a deep narrow rent in the nearest, a thin curl of smoke was still wreathing into the noiseless air. What madness has seized the pedlar? Again, with the speed of thought, he flings down his pack, and rushing to the aperture, gazes in with glaring eyes, as if he would pierce the very secrets of its stony heart. Hurrah! Owen Griffith is a made man. Adieu, pack and staff! adieu for ever!

"God be thanked!" he cried, as he fell on his knees on the hard mountain side, and raised his hand in earnest adoration to the setting sun, that sank like a flaming world in the horizon. "God be thanked!" he cried, "and the *knockers* that are his ministers in the deep places of the earth, if this is, as I augur right, a rich vein of copper, come King or Protector, Griffith Owen will again rear the roof-tree of his father's house."

Then, rising from his knees, and half mad with joy at good fortune so providential and unexpected, he gave a bound in the air, whirled his staff round his head, hit the rocks a blow of friendly recognition that would have felled a mammoth, the blow sounding hollow, like an invocation for the hidden spirit of the mine; whistled "Tri ban gwyr Morgannwg," a national ditty, in the shrillest possible key; and then, clapping his pack hastily on his back, ran down the rarely-trodden and stony path with more of the speed of a hounded Indian than a decent Christian, much less a foot-sore pedlar.


Going down a mountain is easier work than going up, and no hair-splitter will deny that jaded horse and weary traveller brush up their speed when home is in view. . . . A turn of the path brought him, in the darkening gloom of night, to his native village of Llanllyfni, from whence, some ten years since, as a wealthy young farmer, he had set forth, with his father's benediction and the family

musket, to bear a gun in the cause of his prisoned king. With the cautious step of a spy he re-entered his native village, which lay nestling at the mountain's foot, its roofs looking gloomy in the darkness of a clouded and almost starless night. As he entered the street, an old hound, that he remembered well, slunk by with a surly growl. No children gambolled there as of yore. All was changed and solemn. No light flashed from the cottage panes, for the greater part of the windows were cautiously barred, while in others the gleam of a scanty peat fire scarcely lit up the small and diminished circle round the hearth.

The village was as silent as if a plague had withered it—as silent as he remembered it when, as an urchin, he stared at the funeral of some old *sachem* of the district. A cross which had stood where the two roads that intersect the village met was gone, or, worse than total destruction, its shattered shaft told of the storm of fanaticism that had smitten it.

Who had done that? Could it be old *Stand-fast-in-the-Faith*, the Puritan baker, who used to say a grace of half an hour over a stale herring?

Ah! here is the inn! Griffith rubbed his eyes. Was the mountain, the thunder-clap, all a vision? Was he Griffith, or no? Where is the sign of the "Rose and Crown" gone? Where is the roaring fire that once lit up the windows of the hostelrie, even on a summer eve? Where are the revel songs that once poured forth from the doorway, blent with the sound of squeaking fiddle and twanging harp, to scare the passing spirits of the night? Is the "Rose and Crown," too, closed? No, there is indeed a dull hum, as of gossip, from the inner room, and from the half-opened door looks forth Cicely Jones, the once buxom daughter of the merry, knavish landlord, whose ale was as good as his honesty was bad, and who, at least, with an admirable consistency worthy of all praise, cheated rich and poor alike. Cicely! But, oh! how changed! with paler and sharper features,



deadened eye, more sober garb, and primmer head-tire than of yore.

"Cicely!" he would have exclaimed, forgetful for a moment of the lapse of years and his pedlar's disguise; but the words died away in a faint rattle in his throat.

"Why standest thou there, good man?" said the transformed Cicely, with a shrill and sanctimonious voice. "Thou lookest like one of those ungodly hawkers of silly wares that haunt the country and taint the land—one not fit to enter here, for thy looks are profane, and thy calling is ungodly."

"I want but food and a night's lodging," said the pedlar, gaily, in a feigned voice, "and to-morrow I go on my way, my pretty maid; in God's name let me in."

"No idle using of God's name, sirrah," said Cicely, with an ill-suppressed smile of satisfaction at the compliment of the stranger, as with a somewhat milder manner she ushered the wandering man into the large kitchen of the *quondam* "Rose and Crown."

The old kitchen, indeed; but what a change! Where was Jenkins's harp that once stood in the comfortable nook, and over whose strings the hands of the old minstrel of the village used to wander nightly, as if over the threads of some magic loom. There were no fitches hanging now from the smoke-dried rafters overhead, like great mellow fruit, ready to fall—fruitage of the kitchen Hesperides—which it was so delightful to look at, looming through a smoke cloud. Where was the withered sprig of mistletoe—happy tradition of Pagan times—that was wont to hang there from one merry Christmas till another. All gone! The room looked bare and comfortless in the light of a scanty fire, that struggled with a green log on the hearth, scorched it with its ardent tongues of flame, and failing in its attempts at conquest, sank back in despair. No jolly revellers sat round the broad, cold hearth; no fiery faces roared out lusty Welsh ditties, or such English catches of the day as

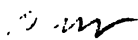
“Old Sir Simon, the king,” and “Three merry men be we.” There were there but half a dozen miserable-looking dogs clutching their ale stoups, and trying vainly to imagine themselves happy. Nearest the fire, in the ancient, polished seat of honour, sat—who?—Old Rhys, the burly landlord, whose laugh was so contagious, whose ancient jokes were wont to set the table in a roar? No, God guide us, who but old Stand-fast-in-the-faith, the baker of former days, looking sourer, more self-righteous, and thinner than ever, and at present—as Griffith soon gathered from stray remarks, as he seated himself in a spare seat, and hid his pack behind a settle—landlord by right of possession of the Rose and Crown, now denominated the “Holy League and Covenant,” and husband of Cicely, whose gall and shrewishness seemed rather heightened than mellowed by years;—on the broad oak table, beside an upturned measure, lay open a greasy and well-thumbed

book of Canticles of interminable length, and very indifferent merit. The last stave of one embracing a chronological view of the biblical history, with a passing glance at the doctrine of election to grace, and a brief view of justification by faith, was just dying away as Griffith crossed the threshold.

"What news from England, friend pedlar?" said the landlord, to the intruder, in a shrill voice, eyeing him suspiciously as he spoke.

"I know of none, your worship," said Griffith, with a look of affected humility; "nothing later than the retirement of my second Lord Protector, who indeed seemed more fit to drive his father's dray than hold the reins of justice."

"Talk not so lightly, knave, of the Lord's most chosen vessel," said the landlord, with a frown, and an angry glance as an ill-suppressed smile stole over the faces of the village worthies.



"I don't know about a chosen vessel," said a thin, miserable man, the village tailor, whose sneaking, half cavalier air blended somewhat strangely with his evident awe of the newly-appointed magistrate and head saint of the township. "Ha, ha, excuse me, your worship, but I think, if I may say so, he's a vessel not seaworthy, and likely to soon run ashore on the sharp rock of the parliament."

An irrepressible laugh followed the speaker's sally, which was re-echoed by Griffith, as the landlord of the rueful visage rose to reply, and drawing a paper from his pocket, containing his last Sunday's harangue on the subject of profane joking, was about to commence an exordium, which might have lasted until some two hours after midnight, when the clatter of horses' hoofs was heard without, and a voice was heard calling so lustily for a drawer, that the room rang again. A bundle of something that had lain un-

noticed, couched beside the landlord's chair, rousing itself at the well-known sound, resolved itself gradually into a humpbacked ostler, and ran to give the needed aid. In a moment the clatter of spurs and sword was heard in the passage, and the next instant with a whispering at the door, and a sound which scandal might have supposed a kiss to Cicely, and the stranger entered the room. He seemed a cavalier of about middle age; little care sat upon his unwrinkled brow, and a smile of contentment crept over his frank soldier's face as his eye caught sight of the now genial fire that blazed up the vault of the hearth. He entered, humming a song, resembling marvellously a well-known love ditty of Carew's, and pulling off a riding cloak, threw it with his plumed hat and sword upon the table beside him. With one glance of his keen eye—such a sweeping glance as a general gives the battle-field—he scanned the circle. His lordly

and commanding look was so mixed with arch affability, as to win even the cold, toad-like heart of the landlord, who, rising from his village throne, offered the vacant seat to the newly-arrived guest, while one or two of the *quasi* revellers rose to allow him to take possession.

“Keep your seats, my worthy host and friends,” said the stranger, in a bland voice, as he seated himself on a bench beside the discomfited tailor, and drew it nearer to the fire, “I leave it to crop-eared knaves and murderers to take either the seats or the thrones of others.”

A whisper ran round the assembly as he said these words, whose boldness was so unusual in those times of suspicion and distrust. The landlord shook his head mysteriously, and was silent; but the other guests, taking courage at the daring utterance of long-suppressed opinions, threw off in some degree their awe of their new-elected magistrate, as he threw himself

back in well-affected drowsiness, and listened to the detail of the death of this friend and the flight of that, half hinted at only as connected with some more recent events of the day. How Griffith longed to ask after his father; but how could he throw off his disguise? First one guest thawed and then another, as the ale grew better and the fire the warmer, till all blended in one clatter of voices, shrill and clear, above which, like the old hound of a pack, rang that of the stranger, who seemed in half an hour to take as deep an interest in the village state policy, ay, more than the grim-visaged landlord himself, who, at last fairly routed from his uneasy dignity, vindicated his authority by a loud hem! At the oracular sound the voices again hushed, for that hem they knew boded news of weight; nor were they mistaken.

“Hem! my Christian friends,” said the sage, “the bustle of this cavalier’s arrival

has prevented me from telling you before that not an hour since a messenger from Caernarvon brought me a despatch from the commissioner of the parliament, acquainting me that a certain malignant officer, one Sir Richard Salisbury, who is deeply implicated in some late conspiracies against the Commonwealth, and especially against the late lamented Lord Protector,"—here the landlord affected to shed a tear, but the stranger smiling, he frowned and proceeded—"has been lately seen in Chester, and being likely to penetrate into Wales, to sow fresh seeds of rebellion against the congregation of the righteous, he therefore begs" (here the reader looked important) "*our* assistance in his apprehension if he ventures towards Merionethshire."

"Ha, ha!" laughed the stranger, to the astonishment of the awe-struck auditors. "I once saw Sir Richard in the French expedition—and know him far too cunning a moun-

tain fox to be caught by the hunters,
'charm they ever so wisely.'"

"Pervert not scripture, sir stranger,"
said the landlord, with the air of an of-
fended saint.

"Ah! ah! the devil rebuking the sin-
ner," replied the traveller, carelessly; "but,
pooh! no cavilling when men are weary; this
is no place for party strife. Here, fresh measures
of ale for these very thirsty friends of mine.
What was that you spoke of but now, friend
Jenkins?" he continued, diverting the conver-
sation, and addressing himself, in a gay tone, to
a tailor who sat beside him; "of a wedding?
And, above all, who is the happy groom, who
the wanton bride? One of those fair ones, I
warrant you, like your fair mistress, master
host; such a one as my worthy pedlar here is
perchance dreaming of; one whose cheeks, as
Suckling says well,

Are like a Catherine pear,
The side that's next the sun."

The pedlar snored audibly as he spoke;

but, in reality awake, he listened, with braced sense and hot brow.

“A village belle, the pride of the valley, sir knight—Mabel Llewellyn: one that has a well-filled purse.” He stopped; for at this moment the pedlar, pretending to awake, yawned, and rising and pushing back the bench on which he sat, wished the landlord, the stranger, and the company, a very good night, and retired to his room in some out-of-the-way corner of the inn. The guests resettled themselves when he shut the door behind him, as the rear rank close up the vacuities of a battle-square. But the knell of retiring had been tolled; slowly, one by one, the pundits of the village retired to their happy helpmates or scolding shrews, as the case might be. Before, however, the last lingerer had retired, the worthy landlord proposed a psalm, which proposal being seconded by a shriveled notary, was given with much unction by the holy pair, aided by Cicely and the ostler, who were called in as auxiliaries. At

the 140th verse, the cavalier, who had twice fallen asleep, failing in a convulsive attempt to conceal his yawns, took up a lantern that stood beside him on the table, and bowing to the singers, strode to the chamber pointed out to him by the landlord, who, breaking off in the middle of his "song of Zion," hurried off after his impatient guest, not without muttering as he went something very like an anathema at the caprice and insolence of the military "sons of Belial."

Leaving our cavalier pacing up and down his narrow room, wrapped up in thought, which, as Sancho said of sleep, "covers a man like a garment," the landlord and his worthy friend below finishing the last eighty verses of their psalm, and the tailor and his companions wending their way homeward, and talking over the adventures of the night, we will return awhile to the pedlar, who retired to his chamber, as we mentioned before, so suddenly. There he is, seated in a chair,

with his head now resting on his pack, and now buried in his hand, as if his heart's blood had frozen at its very source.

"Great God!" he muttered, as he threw himself in anguish on the bed, which, now the rushlight had flickered out, was silvered in the moonshine, "is this the happiness," he groans, "that awaits the stranger who returns to his native land? Married to-morrow! Mabel! the noble, the true-hearted!—and to some crop-eared villain, who, if I struck him to the earth as he clasped her hand at the altar, would disdain to raise his arm against a fugitive so vile, who, though heaven hath granted to him riches, and the very mountain hath burst its doors to show him treasure, is still a helpless wretch, and dares not show his proscribed face in his father's house. Who's there?"

A low, muffled tap at the door stopped the outpourings of his breaking heart.

"Who's there?" he cried again, in a low tone of fear and caution.

"Tush, *in nomine sanctorum!*" said a deep voice; and the cavalier, whom he had seen below, entered the room, and carefully closing, and then bolting the door, drew a pistol from his pocket, coolly cocked it, and placed it beside him on the table, as he sat down with the calm familiarity of one in the presence of an inferior.

"War has taught me," he said, nodding recognition to the pedlar, and smiling at his astonished face, "to take such small precautions as these against surprise from the enemy or the traitor." Then calmly composing himself, he drew forth a pipe, and lighting it with flint and steel, which he pulled from a small embroidered pouch, appearing to be perfectly at his ease, addressed the astonished Griffith: "Thou art one who loves the true cause, I do not question, or otherwise I should not be in thy chamber; that I am one, if you have not already guessed, thou mayst now learn; who I am, thou mayst imagine. The

fox, when hard pressed, knows no retreat is safer than the brache's kennel."

"Sir Richard Salisbury?" said the pedlar, inquiringly.

"The very same," replied the cavalier; "now an outlaw, and one whose head, to fit on a Puritan spike on Temple Gate, were worth a good purseful of angels."

"God forbid!" said Griffith, heartily. "The stag of ten is no fit prey for the carrion crow."

"Well said; like a good heart and true," exclaimed the cavalier, grasping his hand and shaking it vigorously. "It warms one's blood to see one of the true cause, after such psalm-singing, cheating, canting knaves as my host below, whom I left but now taking his posset—but beshrew my tongue, I must to my errand. I would not intrude, friend pedlar, on thy private grief, but still I would fain know what made thee start as if a viper had stung thee, when that mandrake of a fellow, Jack the tailor, spoke of the wedding

—surely, Mabel, of whom he spoke, is dear to thee, and yet art thou not a stranger in these wild regions? Ah! thou turnest pale; thou knewest not that I espied thee.”

“Oh! prithee, sir knight, touch not that wound, it bleeds so new. I am of this village, but ten years since I left my father's house, on the very day that I plighted troth with Mabel, to bear a musket for my king. I shared in the flight at Worcester, and escaping in a fishing-vessel to France, returned some months since, in the disguise of a pedlar to Bristol, and making the best of my way hither, determined to see again my dear one, though death should follow.”

“A brave varlet! truly well spoken; hovering about the spot, as the spirit does round the body it has shaken off. Pretty Mabel has your heart; you seek it here at the risk of life. Well, well, that such fools love makes of us, I have heard;—but you're not dead yet; and Will—immortal Will!—may still speak true—‘Men have died, and

worms have eaten them,' but not for love. Well, I would not jest with thy sorrow, for I know the barb rankles in a young heart worse than Carib's arrow. But hark! Cicely but now whispered me, on the stair, that our friend, good master host, has a shrewd suspicion of evil—likes not me, and holds me for some noble malignant; for so the paltry knaves dare call us; so I should be away ere daybreak. And yet, too, I would willingly aid thee in saving Mabel—pretty dove!—from the talons of the hawk; and I will, too, if heaven aid me."

"God reward thee, noble sir!" said the pedlar—"He who has thus twice sent his angel since the dawn to bless the vagabond and the outcast."

"Call me not an angel," said the cavalier, smiling, and puffing his pipe with renewed vigour, "providential as my visit to thee may seem, whatever be the result. But still I am but one, friend Griffith—I think that is thy name—and who is the second?"

Eagerly Griffith told the wonders of his tale. The cavalier's eye lit up with delight as he listened to the recital which the joyful man poured forth.

"A marvellous thing, truly, my worthy vendor of points, as I ever heard at a camp-fire."

"Marvellous, indeed," replied the pedlar ; "and proof, if aught were wanted, of the existence of spirits of the mines—as we, the Cymri, believe—who disclose treasures to men. Your worship may, belike, have heard of them ?"

"Heard of them I have," said the knight, laughing at the credulity of his companion ; "but believe nought. If I, or Druesius, know aught of science, this was but the natural release of pent-up vapours. But the night grows on, and I must to my resting-place, or my crafty host may smell a rat, and snap me in my hole. By to-morrow, if all holds true, I shall hear from one of our cavalier party ; till then, adieu. I rejoice that Mabel will find

thee on thy return a richer man—heir of a copper-mine in perspective.”

Gathering up his cloak, and secreting his pipe and pistol, the cavalier shook the hand of his humble friend, and, softly shutting his door, stole gently away on tiptoe to his chamber. Griffith listened ; and as he lay down to sleep, clothed as he was, he thought he heard the shuffle of some eavesdropper’s foot retiring from the door ; but, rejecting it as an idle creation of fancy, and pondering over the adventure of the mountain, his visions gradually melted into golden dreams, and he fell asleep. He slumbered peacefully till morning. The gay carolling of a song awoke him ; it was Sir Richard, looking more joyous than even on the preceding night, and waving a letter in his hand.

“ I have news,” he cried, “ of importance from the capital ; but I will not tell thee yet ! Some spy overheard our last night’s conversation. I wager my faith, either the host or the shockheaded ostler ; for they look black,

and are silent—even churlish. They whisper, shrug their shoulders, come not when I call them, and turn away when I speak. Mischief is brooding, I pledge my life. But, up—up, friend pedlar, for the sun's up before you an hour."

As he spoke the pedlar leaped from his bed, shook himself, put on his hat, and looked forth at the day. He sighed; for already a group of persons were passing, dressed in holiday trim, but not wearing the gay ribands of the bride-ales of his youth. Griffith had slumbered late; for just as the pair had cleared a trencher and emptied a flagon, according to the custom of those undegenerated days, the bridal procession passed on their way to the church at the other end of the village. No merry fiddlers led the way; but in their stead came the village notary, arm-in-arm with the host, while the unsanctified tailor walked singing a dolorous psalm, more fit for a funeral than a wedding; conspicuous among his doleful followers was the bride-

groom. Silas Steadfast, a rich miller and a magistrate of the district, came next; and after him the bride, dressed in white, her eyes red with weeping, and her cheeks blanched as her wedding array. Four pretty maidens, on one hand, plied her with consolatory axioms; while, on the other, stalked by a grim man, apparently her father, who, griping her hand at intervals, appeared to freeze her very blood with his chilling frowns. In the rear followed a *posse comitatus* of melancholy villagers, who whispered to each other their comments on the appearance of the reluctant bride. The pedlar, with his hat drawn deeper over his eyes to hide his ill-restrained rage, and the cavalier, who eyed the bride and the surrounding group with his hawk's glance, entered the church unnoticed in their rear.

How altered was that old church since Griffith left it but ten years since; the dark-visaged man of to-day looks back upon the scenes of his youth, and sees those walls again with the eye of a child. How he used to

listen to Parson Hughes, who on all other days sat and chatted with his father, discussing the village news over a black jack of ale, but on Sundays came forth in solemn and long-flowing robes, and, with a face lit up with holy zeal, spoke like an Evangelist to the mountaineers. He remembered how, as a child, he would wander in at the open door of a week day, and gaze with awe at the recumbent knight of stone in the aisle, on which the sun, falling through a painted window above, threw at noon a rainbow light, beautiful as the iris on the spray of a torrent, lighting its stony cheek with the hue of life.

Dreams—dreams all ! but could this then be reality ? He awoke from his reverie : the statue was gone—that heap of battered stone in yonder corner may, perhaps, be its relics ; the window above was there, but half the glass was broken ; one prophet had no head, while his brother saint bore an ominous crack—a sort of bend sinister—across his visage ; still the summer sun fell through it as of yore.

The beautiful glass, fair as a summer cloud, had dissolved before the rude storm of fanaticism. The altar was gone, and a deal chair stood in its place; while in its stead, in the middle of the church, was a long oaken communion-table, that looked as if it had been wrenched from its time-honoured situation in the baronial hall of some pillaged castle. The walls, too, had been covered with whitewash, which gave a glaring and harsh tone to the building, and through which peered some half-covered monuments of a century back. But his attention was again recalled to the altar; for now the bridal groups, who had stayed for the moment, which he devoted to a reverie, so silent, that above their low breathing could be heard the iron pulsation of the belfry clock, and the deep soft cooing of a pigeon in the turret out in the sun, were startled by the shrill, nasal tones of the hateful voice of the bridegroom. With a sanctimonious leer, in which a tinge of anger

at the bride's evident reluctance seemed to mingle, he exclaimed—

“Dear Dorcas — for so I must henceforth call thee — remove, I say, this vain chaplet of flowers from thy head; it savoureth far too strongly of the world;” so saying, he pulled it rather roughly from her white brow, and, breaking the blue ribbon that held the flowers together, strewed them on the rushes that covered the floor. Mabel's cheek glowed for a moment with shame and anger, but the flame sank back again to the troubled heart, as, in spite of the rude frown of her father, she was about to reply in impatient terms. With difficulty the cavalier held Griffith down, as, with flushed cheek and deep-drawn breath, he saw the rude insult offered to one whom he held so dear.

“Restrain thyself, Griffith,” whispered the knight, “and await the issue. See, here comes the minister, and a fit fool truly to join so happy a pair.”

The minister who entered as he spoke wore a cold, unimpassioned face, of which prominent cheekbones and compressed lips formed the chief features. Behind came—and Griffith's heart leaped within him at the sight—his father, looking careworn and a little graver than ten years since, but with step as light and as firm as ever. In his rear followed the ostler, in a new doublet. The bride's cheek flushed again with a fever's glow as she gazed upon the new comers, who were exchanging greetings and well-wishes, as sincere as those forms usually are, with those around her. Her father clutched her arm again convulsively, and whispered in her ear, as she stood there mute and with fixed eyes, like one half turned to stone.

"As the time draweth on," said the minister, with a nasal twang, eminently pious, "and all who will take part in this ceremony, blessed of the Lord, are here assembled, we had better commence."

A prayer having been offered up, the usual

charge was given to the pair, to declare any impediment that might exist to the marriage, as they should answer at the dreadful day of judgment. Again Mabel looked up to heaven as if for help, and was about to speak, but at the sight of her father, and the admonitory whisper of the bridesmaids, she bent down her head, and buried it in her hands. The ostler grinned with a fiendish smile of malicious pleasure. Again Griffith attempted to burst from the clutch of the cruel stranger.

“Keep silent, you hot-headed Welshman, in the name of all the saints,” he muttered, in a deep, fierce whisper; “wait a few sentences more, and then at him, like a hound slipped at a stag. I’m at your elbow. For your own—for Mabel’s sake, stay,” he added, more tenderly; and Griffith again crouched down behind the distant oaken bench, on which he sat glaring with eager eyes, like a leopard before its spring, clutching his good staff convulsively, in a way that the worthy Sir Richard thought to himself boded

no good to the bridegroom, and still less to the humpbacked ostler.

With a shrill, harsh voice, the Genevese minister proceeded in the service, turning up the whites of his eyes, as if he was going to offer the bride up as a sacrifice to the demon of fanaticism.

“Wilt thou have this woman for thy wedded wife” (the bridegroom looked patronisingly at Mabel), “to live together, after God’s ordinance, in the holy state of matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour and keep her, in sickness and in health, and, forsaking all other, keep thee only” (the bridesmaids, as in duty bound, appeared affected to tears) “unto her, so long as ye both shall live?”

Then there was a moment’s pause, broken only by a sob from Mabel, as the bridegroom assumed the bearing of a suffering saint, and replied, “I will.”

“You won’t!” thundered a voice from the other end of the church—’twas Griffith’s

voice; a moment before the time he had burst from Sir Richard, leaving his short cloak, like a second Joseph, in his hands. The bride gave one look at the maddened figure of the pedlar, and fell, as if in death, into the arms of her attendant maidens. The bridegroom turned pale with terror, and Mabel's father with rage, while old Griffith ran into the extended arms of his returned son. With a sudden shriek, the humpbacked ostler drew a knife, and was rushing upon the bold intruder, when a round blow from a staff, in the strong hand of Sir Richard, felled him to the floor, where he lay stunned, his head striking, in his fall, against the corner of an oak bench, the knife flying far from his hand, and ringing on the stone pavement of the church. Mabel's father was the first to recover his courage, and to demand "the cause of this irreligious, and, he might say, unchristian intrusion."

"Intrusion, quotha, worthy sir," said Sir Richard, in a gay tone, "it's time for in-

trusion, when the hooded crow carries off the pet dove of one's bosom. Know you my angry friend here?"


"I do, sir stranger," said Mabel's father; "I recognise in him a godless youth, who left his father's house some ten years since, to bear arms for a tyrant, whose headless corpse now rots in a nameless grave."

"Now, by my Lord and Saviour," cried Sir Richard, "it were too great a kindness to stab thee on the spot, thou drivelling dotard, that darest first do the work of a murderer, and then boast of thy butchery. Now, begone, ere my blood rise!"—(he drew his sword as he spoke, and pointed to the church-door)—"and all thy associates, who love a clown and a brewer better than a crowned and anointed king, or I'll make thee and thy fanatic crew skip to a tune played by this sharp fiddle-bow."

Sullenly slow, with lowering looks and angry mien, the Puritan, accompanied by only three of the villagers quitted the church.

“Get thee out, too, thou shapeless villain,” said Sir Richard, as shaking the remaining ostler by the collar of his doublet, he thrust him out after his friends. The worthy minister, who had dropped his book on the first alarm, and, amid the screams of the bridesmaids, was quietly sneaking away, when Sir Richard’s strong hand, grasping his robe, detained him. “No, no, my venerable drawler, not so quickly, no stealing a march on a cavalier; thou must, ere thou leavest this church, if thou wishest to leave without a slit weasand, join the hands of this happy pair, who stand there with April faces, not more eager for the office than thou art to escape.”


Mabel had, indeed, recovered from her swoon, if a blushing cheek is any sign of returning life, and now threw herself, with her pedlar lover, at the feet of her benefactor, who, raising them, led them hand in hand to the table. With a low, discontented voice, the Puritan minister performed the sacred duty, and had just concluded the service amid



the congratulations of the bystanders, who, in the absence of their worthy magistrate, evinced strong symptoms of a violent reaction to royalty, when a loud tap was heard at the door, and a voice demanded entrance in the name of the Commonwealth. The door was opened, and in walked the landlord, in full bloom of magisterial dignity, followed by the bridegroom, with his lowering face; the ostler, with his head bound up with a stablecloth; and last, not least, four troopers, whose spurs tingled as they strode up the aisle, with pistols cocked.

"I hold here," said the landlord, "an order, sealed by Sir John Gratton, governor of Caernarvon, to arrest and detain the person of a malignant rebel, named Sir Richard Salisbury; and I also hold here a warrant, signed by the magistrate of the southern district of Merionethshire, which is myself, to apprehend one John Griffith, formerly a pikeman in the malignant army, and now an itinerant pedlar, who is sus-

pected to be a spy and conveyor of intelligence to the disaffected. Corporal, do your duty, in the name of God and the Commonwealth; yonder are the——” traitors he would have said, had not at that moment the staff of Sir Richard felled him to the earth with the shock of a slaughtered bullock, while at the same time Griffith, in spite of the screams of Mabel and her bridesmaidens, struck down the ostler by a well-directed blow of his fist; and, before the soldiers could interfere, fell upon the bridegroom, and gave him such a pommeling that he roared again, evincing an impatience under suffering quite unworthy either of an ancient or a modern saint. Sir Richard, in the act of drawing his sword, was however pinioned from behind, and his arms being tied with his own scarf, he rolled helplessly on a bench, cursing alike his enemies and their new allies. The pedlar, in the act of making for the door, was stopped by a heavy blow from the butt-end of a pistol, the



force of which was, however, somewhat broken by a small skull-cap, which, concealed in his broad-leafed hat, he had clapped on his head in the first alarm, with all that promptitude which a person acquires who has been long habituated to scenes of danger. Mabel saw not the blow, for she had swooned.

Placing a bench upon the communion-table, and seating himself thereon, the magistrate, with his usual dignified preliminary "hem," collecting his body-guard around him, called—in a pompous voice—on Digory Jackson, ostler, the first witness, who commenced, in a voice faint from exhaustion, a detail of the conversation which (as our readers already may guess) he had overheard the night before between the cavalier and the pedlar. The magistrate started at the strange account of the discovery of the copper-mine, and eyed suspiciously, first the prisoner, and then the witness.


“And have you, Diggory Jackson, who have been sworn to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, which means no gloss or commentary, and nothing besides the truth, visited the mountain to see the said orifice?”

“I have, your worship, and ever since daybreak, poor weak vessel that I am, with my wounded head, and other infirmities, I have spent in a vain search in the mountains.”

“Diggory Jackson, your wits wander; you have but just received the said wound from the son of Belial; for your poor sword was not blessed like Gideon's: God favoured it not.”

“I wander rather. I failed, your worship, from not knowing the name of the mountain, which the vagrant had whispered too low for my ear.”

The pedlar, downcast as he was at the array of justice, and at the ill fortune which had thus dashed the chalice from his



very lips, could not repress a smile, which the cavalier reciprocated.

“Advance, corporal; and stand down, you first witness, Diggory Jackson.”

The corporal, a rough soldier, advanced, making an awkward and ungainly bow to the magistrate, as he produced the contents of the pedlar’s pack, which had been forced open by command of the landlord.

“I find here, amongst various accursed vanities and devil’s snares for weak Christians, two rebel songs, one entitled ‘The Brewer’s dead, his Son’s an Ass,’ and ‘The Return of the Cavaliers.’”

“Search the other prisoner, and produce the description of his person.”

“Eyes blue, nose aquiline, hair chestnut, a scar over the left temple——”

“What is that paper in the prisoner’s doublet?”

“I will read it myself to his worship,” said Sir Richard, with a voice of triumph,

standing forward and snatching the paper from the soldier's hand.

“ ‘Mercurius Redivivus, London, 8th of May.

“ ‘Yesterday the Commons, to the universal joy, appointed a committee to invite his Majesty to return and take possession of his dominions ;’ and here follows a line more to my own purpose, which may save a bullet or two at Caernarvon : ‘The king’s letter, received yesterday from Breda, promises an amnesty to all persons whatsoever,’ and therefore to me and my friends here, Mr. Magistrate.”

The magistrate looked petrified as he sat ; the soldiers, lowering their pistols, shouted, with all the ardour of sudden proselytes,

“Long live the king and Sir Richard Salisbury !”

“Peace to all,” cried Sir Richard ; “up with the ‘Rose and Crown,’ down with the ‘Covenant ;’ set the beer barrels going,” he added, throwing a handful of silver to the soldiers. “All shall be Cock-a-hoop to-night,

for the meanest Christian shall this eve, ere the sun set, see two moons rise over the mountains, and every loyal man shall let his brains reel, in honour of his blessed majesty. Shout, my masters, God save the king, down with his enemies ; and God bless the bridegroom and his bride !”

And they did shout, such a shout that made the welkin ring, a joyful sound that started the owl in the belfry, and drove him forth hooting into the dazzling sunlight.

A merry night they had of it, too, at the great bridal feast ; at the “Rose and Crown” many a health was drunk to the lusty pedlar and his pretty bride ; and the knight was the merriest of them all, for he pledged every one, and took especial delight in proposing toasts expressive of extravagant and flaming loyalty, and in making any suspected semi-Puritan go down upon his marrow bones and empty a mea-

sure to prove his truth. To judge from the lip-zeal, never were so loyal a band as the quondam adherents of the landlord-justice and the fallen Rump; they must have been perpetually burning to rush into arms for Charles.

On the morrow, to the universal sorrow of the whole village, and more particularly of two we know well, Sir Richard departed on his way to his own estate in Pembroke-shire, to rouse the dormant loyalty of that county. Within the week, Mabel's father, in spite of her tears, attended by the notary, the minister, and our worthy friend the ostler, converted their goods into broad pieces and departed for the Plantations.


Need we say, dear sympathising reader, that Griffith and Mabel lived happily; and that by the vigorous exertions of the former in the copper-mine, their family rose to great importance in Merionethshire? If the reader visits Llanllyfni, he may be sure that the rosiest-cheeked child in the groups

of players, and the most ingenious architect of mud-pies in that broad meadow near the church, are youthful descendants of Griffith Owen, the lucky pedlar, and Mabel Llewellyn his bride.

THE CORPSE HOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

THE "Vale of Waters" is one of the fairest spots in North Wales. If it is not so sublimely wild as Llanberris, it is more peaceful and pastoral; if less beautiful than Llangollen, it possesses more of legendary interest. It is hemmed in on one side by the black, precipitous walls of the "Eagle's Mountain," as the Welsh call Snowdon, long since divested of those forests, the shelter of the wolf and boar, that once covered the peaks of Yr Wyrdfa, or "The Conspicuous," to use the language of the bards. Behind it lies Nant Glas, or the Blue Valley, with its stream



forcing its way through a chaotic world of rocks, on which no tree, no wild-flower, and scarcely the rudest lichen, can find nourishment ; yet so tinted, and shaded, and brightened by mists, and rains, and frost are these crags, that they glow beneath a sunset with all the beautiful and shifting colours of an iceberg.

Here every crag has its legendary tale, beginning from the very twilight of Druidical times down to the full daylight of mediæval history. Here the Knights of St. John had a hospice ; there the wretched Vortigern, the Sebastian of early British story, found a dishonourable shelter, protected by the spell of Merlin, who seems to have called devil, fiend, and spirit to ransack the elements to win back for him everything but a kingdom. Here, too, are recollections of the Romans and St. Helena. On this height, in a grated dungeon of that tower that still affords an eyrie for the golden eagle, groaned the brother of the jealous Llewellyn ; and here for twenty-three years he lay, companion of the gilded newt and

toad, watching the hawk fly past, and hearing the wind roar free among the mountain passes.

Nature, within the circle of a dozen miles, has, indeed, concentrated all the beauty of Wales—mountains crowned with mist, and girt round with lakes so clear that you can count their polished pebbles, and see the speckled trout that glide in them; cataract and stream, green meadow and wooded height; while high over the highest peak, hidden, save when revealed by the lightning, rises Snowdon, its great broad base enveloped by the enfolding mountains, seen only here and there through a break in the range, that opens like a breach in the rampart of a stormed city.

The merriest-hearted fellow in Nant Gwynnant, now nearly a century ago, was Owen Glas; the best runner, the best leaper, and the best rider; the best fisher, the surest-footed cragsman—in a word, the most skilful at all the six feats of strength that constituted the *Tadogian* in the old Welsh Olympic

games. The merriest dancer was Owen round the bonfires on the eve of All-Saints, and the clearest, fullest voice was his at the *Plygan*, or Cock-crowing, as the Welsh call the assembly held in their churches on the morning of Christmas-eve.

Happy, indeed, would have been the maiden whose charms could have won him to a *betrothal-bedding*. Not that Owen was by any means a perfect hot-pressed hero. He had the vices of his nation. He was hot and passionate, a full tide of Celtic blood ran tingling in his veins, and he would use his knife at a country revel as quickly as any Elizabethan cut-purse. It was a "word and a blow" with him, and the blow generally first. He had, moreover—for truth must out, and we'd better make a clean breast of it at starting—more than the Cymri's usual partiality for the barley-broth, or *curw*, without caring much whether the honest liquor came to us from Egypt or Scandinavia. In his stepfather's cabin—for Owen was an orphan—hung ten spigots, as

trophies of his victories at as many *termings*, a bacchanalian custom of the mountain-land, "more honoured in the breach than the observance."

The *terming* was thus carried on: a band of toppers, who had earned some celebrity for strength of head, used to retire to some lonely ale-house, tap a barrel of the strongest October, and seated round it, horn in hand, drink till it was consumed. From "morn till dewy eve" they sat, from midnight till the reddening of the day, no rest, no food, till to the victor at this rude revel the spigot was awarded as a well-earned prize.

Barbarous as such debauches may appear, they seem to have once prevailed in England, if a legend connecting Shakspeare with one can be relied on. For Scotland, let Burns's "Song of the Whistle" speak. Oh, well did *Iago* say, "I learned it in England, where, indeed, they are most potent in potting. Your Dane, your German, and your swag-

bellied Hollander—Drink ho!—are nothing to your English.”

Owen Glas, with all his cheerful laugh and merry eye, was an orphan, and had no home but the cottage of his foster-father, and he was an old blind harper, who was known to every one, gentle and peasant, in the whole country-side.

There was never a merry-making, but Old Howell and his telyn were there; never a miner's dance on the welcome Saturday night, but there might be heard, pouring out from the inn's latticed window, “The Ash Grove,” or “The Rising of the Sun;” any night in the week, in some farm-house or hall, Howell might have been found surrounded, like an old Homer, with his train of rustic flatterers and admirers, while the dancing throng footed it round the candle on the floor, or kept up an equally old remnant of by-gone ages, by placing crossed pipes upon the floor, in the room of more harmful swords.


It was to travel back three good centuries,

to see the old man's grey locks falling over the harp; to see the strings swept by his trembling but skilful fingers; to see his vacant eye turned up as if for inspiration, or his head bent forward to catch the light footsteps of Owen, the son of his heart. For Howell was no vagabond musician, and he had a love of his gentle art, that men of higher note, who would have derided his wild marches and plaintive dirges, might well have envied. His misfortunes had heightened, too, his powers of reflection, and increased in him the natural superstition of his imaginative race. He knew by rote every fairy legend, every story of exorcised spirit, fiend, or devil, that haunted mountain, lake, or fen. He was the oracle of the children, whom he loved to gather round him at a farmer's fire, and, clambering on his knees, to let them play with his grey hair, or twang his harp-strings, on which he would illustrate the magic wonders of which he told. He had, perhaps, arrived at that state of mind when imagination takes almost

the place of reason, or reigns rather in an empire of its own, unchecked for the time by the faculty which too often rules it so despotically. To him the spirits that had passed away, "the fair humanities of old religion," were sober realities. To his dimmed eye they existed as much as those tangible beings among whom he dwelt, whose cheering voice he heard, whose kindly grasp he felt, at whose board he sat, and at whose hearth he basked.

Howell had roamed among the mountains from a child, until he knew every crag as well as he did the streets of his birthplace—for he was not born blind. He was sixteen, when a sudden desire came upon him to sleep upon Snowdon; for he who did so, say the bards, will awake either mad or inspired. "The firstlings of his thought" became the firstlings of his hand. He sought a nook in the rock, just where the region of mist begins its twilight, and told not even the friend of his bosom of what he planned. He fell

asleep in his strange rock-chamber. He dreamt of bliss; but in "the dark night, deep night, the blackest of the night," a storm burst upon the mountain; a flash of lightning disclosed to his eyes, for the last time, the valley of his birth, with a red glare like the dawn of the day of judgment; then deep night fell upon him; and he waited long, long for morning, but to him it never came. Some shepherds, searching for their flocks that the storm had scattered, found Howell groping his way on the very edge of the terrific chasm of Crib Coch. They led him home, and told him what they feared. Every restorative that village art could furnish was resorted to in vain. He had been struck blind, incurably blind. From that day, however, true inspiration dawned upon him; now for the first time, as if a new sense had awakened within him, he heard the voice of nature in everything, from the sighing of the summer breeze to the roar of the torrent. And he had need of such consolation, for heavier



sorrows fell upon him now that he was less able to bear them. In the bitterness of his heart he thought that even his God had forsaken him, in not tempering the wind to the shorn lamb. The maiden he loved forsook him in his misfortune, and married another. Perhaps he had been prepared for this blow, for her inquiries for him had grown less and less frequent, though she had wept when she first saw his grey, sightless eyes, and sobbed that her love was still unchangeable. But even in this sore trial Howell gathered patience. "The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord!" was his only exclamation. She married, and died in her first childbed, and the peasants whispered that there was divine vengeance in it. Howell never mentioned her name again, but it was observed, when he played the well-known air of "Merd Megan," "Margaret's Daughter"—her name was Margaret—that a tear would sometimes roll from his sightless orb, and he would then invariably

change it to the beautiful "Codiad yr Hedydd," or "The Rising of the Lark," so full of hope and life, and spring and morning, as if by this he meant to imply her having risen to her home among the angels. But this story was very well for work-a-day sort of people, it would not do for the more superstitious, who with sundry shrugs and "hems," by which they implied that they could tell more if they liked, declared that "Howell had been thus punished by the demon of the 'Adders' Lake,' for daring to sleep all night upon its shore."

Yet not even with blindness did Howell cease his lonely wanderings, not even with advancing age that robbed him of his vigour and his speed. He would still stroll for hours beside the pathless morasses that lie among the hills, finding his way by a sort of instinct over the dark tracks, where one footstep aside would have dragged him down to "muddy death," scrambling over peat cuttings, and wading through low rushy

pools, to reach some lonely lake, known to few but the fishermen. There, on the flat shore, strewn with grey pebbles, over which the water crept with soft, low music, when the east wind drove in faster the tiring waves, he would often stretch himself till the chilly wind told of coming night ; then would he rise, stride home, eat hastily his frugal meal of buttermilk and black bread, and hurry off to the "inn's best room," to busy himself with his harp, and describe upon it the emotions of the day—now animating the revellers with the stirring march of the "Men of Harlech ;" "Codiad yr Nant ;" "The Rising of the Sun ;" "Meddwdd Myr ;" "Merry and Topsy ;" or throwing the deep melancholy of his soul, like a warning voice, into "Ar hyd y Nos," "The Live-long Night," or the simple "Pro Gân," "The Lullaby."

Although Owen Glas was an orphan, and depending, indeed, on the charity of one who lived himself on alms, he was the son of rich parents, his father having held one of the

largest farms in the Beaver's Valley, where of old the last King of Wales was taken prisoner by Edward I. He died suddenly of fever, leaving his son, with his last breath, to the guardianship of his brother-in-law, Hugh-y-Fwyall, a poor descendant of the celebrated Constable of Crickieth Castle, who, at the battle of Poitiers, took the French king prisoner, having first hewn off the head of his charger with a single blow of a broad axe.

Everybody supposed, of course, naturally enough, that in due time the infant would succeed to his father's patrimony ; but on the day of the funeral, when, after the interment, all the guests were assembled at the feast usual in Wales on such occasions, Fwyall produced a will, found, as he said, by him in a drawer of the deceased's old cabinet, leaving all his property, and even his personals, "to his dear brother," Hugh-y-Fwyall, and recommending his infant son to Hugh's parental care, to adopt him as his own, and to bring him up with his own daughter of nearly the

same age. Strange looks were exchanged, but men shrugged their shoulders and were silent ; nobody could question the caprices of a man scarce cold in his grave. The subject was a nine-days' wonder, and, after that transitory existence, it passed away as nine-days' wonders do. Some, endued with that rather late spirit of prophecy common in the world, whispered to their neighbours that they always thought the deceased hadn't much natural affection ; others remained silent, but, by frowns and portentous winks, implied the existence of fraud ; while a third party, of a neutral tint, indifferent to everything but their own affairs, declared that they thought the thing very reasonable, and did not see why parents should not leave their property as they liked, as long as it was not to a d—— *Saesneg*.

Time passed on ; Hugh, from a poor man, struggling with difficulties, almost overpowered by their multiplicity, and just keeping his head above "a sea of troubles," grew a thriving farmer, built barns and homesteads

in the midst of his broad acres, and finally commenced working a small copper-mine in one of those little wild recesses which scarcely deserve the name of valleys, in the strong buttresses of Snowdon. But Hugh had been soured by a long course of adversity, and had too long felt the pitiless chidings of the storm, to relax at once into bland smiles at the first burst of sunshine. He remained still black-browed and churlish. He was beloved by none, for he seemed to hate all; even the mendicant sped faster by his door. The rumour spread that he was a man sceptical about all the old superstitions which were handed down from father to son; and the dalesmen held this as but the beginning of a deeper, darker infidelity. He trod haunted paths at nightfall without a fear; he hung no sacred plants over his threshold on the eve of St. John; and to show openly his contempt of such "cursed folly," as he called it bitterly, he buried his best-beloved sister on the north side of the mountain church—the wrong side, as the


peasants shudderingly call it—among suicides and children unbaptised. He was, indeed, a man who seemed to bear the brand of an inhuman crime upon his brow. People shunned him in his walks, grasped not his hand readily in the market-place, and shrunk farther from his seat in the inn-kitchen.

Unconscious of these feelings, and too merry-hearted, perhaps, to regard them even if he had known them, Owen grew up to a man's stature, with all the fair face of his father, all his mother's dark eye and frank brow, with all his sire's sense, and with what he loved to boast of—the foot of a goat and the eye of a falcon. Yet to one less cheerful than himself, his life would have been a hard one. It had been long seen by all, and even he at last came to the horrid consciousness, that he was hated by his stern guardian. From a boy, Hugh had disliked his proud, swelling spirit, and now, in full manhood, when they stood almost on the same footing, it became intolerable. He had long stunted him

in food, and beaten him ; now he set him at hard tasks, beyond his strength, and condemned him to worse than Egyptian slavery, in the dark, narrow, noisome chambers of the lonely mine, that secluded him for twelve hours together from daylight and the cheerful sun. But the youth bore it unrepiningly, spoke of it to no one, and never bated an atom of his merry-heartedness at the village dances. His thoughts were those of Shakspeare's *Ferdinand*—

There be some sports all painful, but their labour
Delight in them sets off ; some kinds of baseness
Are nobly undergone ; and most poor matters
Point to rich ends.

Let us tell it without further mystery—he loved the daughter of his taskmaster. The fair maiden bore the ancient Welsh name of *Myrannwy* ; a gentle, innocent, warm-hearted creature was she, pure as the *Miranda* of the poet. She loved Owen ; she knew not why ; they had been brought up together till their hearts had grown into one ; so trees grow together



by contact. She tempered his fierce nature ;
he felt solace in the soothing ; they were

Like two berries on a common stem.

Beautiful in contrast as the birch and oak
that grow side by side upon the mountain,
she clung to him as naturally and as unin-
quiringly as the bind-weed embraces the
forest tree. He loved her as a sister ; he
loved her because she pitied him. Her love
lightened his sorrows, and consoled him for
his toils. When her father was absent, she
would often trip over the mountain-paths, and
sitting down upon a rock at the mine's mouth,
carol like an angel till evening came, and with
it rest ; she was a guardian-angel of purity
to dear Owen ; and when Hugh flamed forth
into frenzied passions, and half-drew his knife
upon Owen, she would cling to his knees,
and bring him straightway to such a melting
mood that his large tears would drop faster


Than Arabian trees their medicinal gum.

But the breach soon grew visibly wider.

The youth became more impetuous ; the old man more covetous, stern, and unyielding—

As with age his body uglier grew,
So his mind cankered.

Mistaking the patience of Owen for pusillanimity, Hugh laboured to invent tasks in the mine to crush his spirit ; planning new levels, where none but a madman could have expected to find ore ; declaring, in a hypocritically-assumed fit of superstition, that he had heard *knockers*, as the mine-spirits are called, in the workings. A spark fell upon the train prepared. In a chance conversation with an enemy of Hugh's, Owen heard the whole history of his life, and of the imputed fraud, painted in the worst colours of detraction. The very suspicion was enough to an impetuous mind, heated by injuries so recent. Confronting Fwyall, he taxed him with his crime, forswore his acquaintance, defied his utmost vengeance ; and finally, bearding him in an inn-kitchen, in spite of all the entreaties of his foster-father, struck his tormentor to the earth. Rising




slowly from the earth, with the blood streaming from a cut on his brow, Hugh then cursed the orphan, prayed God to send the eagle's ulcer* upon him ; and finally, declaring himself freed, by this base ingratitude, from all claims, forbade him his house, and turned him a beggar upon the world.

None who saw it could forget, to their dying day, the dark malignity of Hugh's scowl as he thus spoke ; but, ere he had ended, Owen had left the room. Rushing frantically through the village, he hastened to his father's house, now no longer his home, and bidding adieu to Myrannwy, who wept in horror at his blood-shot eyes and disordered hair, left her, as he said, perhaps for ever. To a boon companion whom he met he said, in answer to his anxious and wondering inquiries, that he was going to "St. George's Well, to make an offering for an enemy." He stayed no longer, but, plunging down a mountain-path that led towards

* A legendary disease.

Caernarvon, he was soon lost in the coming night.

But from these few words the horrified peasants had gathered too clearly the nature of his journey. From time immemorial it had been the custom in Wales, when hatred ran high, to go and curse an enemy at a saint's well : the injured man was required to lay there a small piece of money upon the altar, upon which he knelt bare-kneed, uttering the curse, and praying God to bring it to pass. Pallid and breathless, the man broke into the circle at the inn-fire, and told them of the news. Fwyall had already gone, but the tidings soon reached his ears. Terrible was the rage of the misanthrope at such palpable evidence of a deep-rooted hatred ; but he affected to be indifferent to the story, and to disbelieve its truth. Finding his daughter in tears, he burst forth into blasphemous execrations, bade her not weep for such a villain, or he would turn her also adrift to follow him through the world.



CHAPTER II.

It wanted two hours to sunset on the next day, and the maiden was weeping over her distaff, with her face buried in her hands, when she heard a low tap at the window by her side, and, looking up, beheld the well-known face of her lover staring in at the pane. So fearful and so altered was his gaze that she cried for help, and as her father rushed in from an adjoining room, the face again disappeared. He started when she told him of what she believed to be an apparition, and, with a frown of rage and fiendish gesticulation, he soon afterwards left the house. It was half an hour later, as it afterwards ap-

peared when these points were put together, that Owen was seen by a village boy who was tending some goats on a hill near the mine. He carried a small crowbar in his hand, walked at a rapid pace towards the working, and was then seen no more.

It was the day after, when, in consequence of the statement of the boy and Myrannwy to the anxious inquiries of old Howell, that one party of villagers set off in the direction of St. George's Well, and another to the level of the copper-mine in the mountains. They took with them matches and torches, for the winding passages had already been pushed some hundred yards in search of metal. Entering hastily, with a nervous anxiety, not unmingled with superstition, the foremost man stumbled upon something on which he had put his foot. He stooped down to pick it up; it was an open clasp-knife. "Hugh Fwyall's," said one of the miners, holding his torch to it; "I know it by that notched handle;" and, thrusting it into his pocket, they hurried on.

They had reached the last winding but one; when their leader, suddenly uttering a shrill exclamation of horror and wonder, rushed forward—It was the body of Owen Glas, quite cold and stiff. A mass of rock resting upon his temple, and crushing his fair features to a shapeless mass, disclosed the cause of death. In one cold hand he still clenched a crowbar; by his side lay an extinct torch, and a tin of the coarse powder used in blasting. With an outburst of exclamations at a death so horrid and so untimely, and with muttered allusions to the curse of the Well—which seemed to have fallen upon him who uttered it—they hastily constructed a rude bier of birchen boughs, and covering Owen's face, to hide the traces of so frightful a death, they bore him to that house he had left in such hot and sinful anger.

The crowds that met the sad procession had already borne the news to every house. Fwyall, with his brow still lowering, but wearing a decent sorrow, came forth to meet the

corpse, and to thank the bearers for their pious care.

None may tell the agony of Myrannwy. Believing now confidently that she had really seen the spirit of her lover, she fell into a succession of swoons, that seemed almost to promise that death should unite those who through life had been as one. She did not, indeed, long survive him.

CHAPTER III.

FIVE days had elapsed since the finding of the body, and the people were assembling about sunset round the door of the "Ty Corph," or "Corpse's House," to take part in the ceremony called by the Welsh themselves "gwylaos," which, although tinged with a deeper tone of solemnity, resembles in all its salient points the wilder Irish "lykewake."

The door was constantly opening for the egress and ingress of the nearer friends of the deceased, for the farmers who stole in to drop a word of comfort to Fwyall, or for the matrons and white-cheeked maidens, to soothe, if they could

not console, Myrannwy, who still mourned, and would not be comforted.

On stools in the centre of the room, covered with a white sheet, to signify that he had never been married, lay the coffin of Owen, and upon it burned three candles, emblematical of the Trinity, their pale glimmer scarce lighting up the darkness of a stormy evening. A frozen crowd at the door seemed as if moved by a common feeling to stay for some person, either of consequence or nearly connected with the family.

While some looked down the road, others gathered in knots, and discussed the dangers of mining, not without hurried glances at the corpse. There was not one present who did not appear moved when old Howell entered, his head buried in his hands. Heeding not the greeting of Fwyall, he sat down, without a word, at the right hand of the corpse, as if claiming by prescription the title of chief mourner;

then suddenly rising, he asked for Myrannwy, and shaking his head mournfully at the answer, resumed his place.

In a few minutes a slight movement and whispering was heard without, and the squires and magistrates of the district entered, the crowd pouring in and closing the door after them. Not surprised at visits so frequent on such occasions, Fwyall rose, and welcoming the guests, beckoned them to a seat of honour. Every one being seated, a servant passing round, handed pipes and lights to each. Then for a moment there was a deep silence, as the parish-clerk rose to read the prayers usual on such occasions, when suddenly the old harper, thrusting him gently back into his seat, rose, to the astonishment of all, to speak:—

“Friends,” he said, in a voice deep and husky with emotion, “the body of a *murdered* man lies before you!”

Fwyall, who had remained hitherto almost

unconcerned, turned pale at these words, rose, but sank down again into his chair, and gazed with lack-lustre eyes on the speaker, as if some spell, too powerful to be broken, retained him.

“Ye all know,” continued Howell, turning himself towards Fwyall—“ye all know with what love I loved him who lies dead before us—he was to me more than a son, and I loved him more than a father. I watched over him as a mother over her child,—he knew it, and he loved me for it. I had long seen ill blood rising between him and Fwyall; and I heard Owen, though he didn’t know it, vow to go on a pilgrimage to St. George’s Well. I heard him come home, too, for I knew the path by which he would return, and I lay waiting for him all day by the scorching sun, and all night by the blessed moon; and I heard him come and followed him, all unseen, to the cottage—yes, to Fwyall’s cottage; and he

got his tools out of the shed, and hurried off towards the mine. I was sure he was gone there, for I heard him mutter, 'Once more—once more!' Then I followed him—but far, far behind, for I am old, and he was fleet of foot; here and there I had to creep round some rock to prevent his seeing me; once I lay down to rest by the side of the cool lake—for I was weary with watching, and my mind was overtaxed.

"Yes! I made on; I listened when I got to the entrance of the level, thinking I should hear the clink of his pick; but, to my horror, I heard instead angry voices—the voices of Owen and Fwyall."

All eyes were turned on the murderer, who seemed to turn to very stone under their gaze.

"Fool that I was to linger! I heard a dull blow, a groan, then the fall of a piece of rock; and ere I had scarce time to sink behind a shelving crag

at the mine's mouth, Fwyall there rushed forth as if a devil had chased him, and in an instant he was out of sight. I groped my way in, and felt for the body ; for all is dark for me. I hinted indistinct fears, the search was made, and the body was found. I found it, but there was not even a pulsation at the heart. Let us give up this murderer to justice !

CHAPTER IV.

It was dim evening, and sentence was about to be passed upon a prisoner. He turns his head. It is Fwyall. The chief, and almost the only witness, has been the old harper. The Chester jury retire just as the lamps are lighted. They return in half an hour. It seemed a lifetime to the prisoner. There is a pause of intense expectancy.

“Gentlemen of the jury, have you agreed upon the verdict? Is the prisoner at the bar, Hugh-y-Fwyall, guilty of the crime whereof he stands indicted, or not guilty?”

“Guilty!”

Then for the first time Fwyall, who had never spoken during the trial till now, with a countenance expressive of the most diabolical malice and revenge, poured a volley of execrations upon the harper who had accused him:—

“D—n seize you, you foul old villain—the red plague blister you! Had I liberty now, I would use it to take your life. If I escape from prison, I vow to Heaven I will murder you!”

“May God visit the blood of this man upon my head if another murder is committed by his bloody hand,” said the judge. “Go, Mr. Sheriff, procure a carpenter, have a gallows erected and a coffin made, on the very spot where the monster stands; for from this bench I will not remove until I see him executed.”*

* A similar execution did take place in the last century, improbable and horrible as it may now seem.

The Sheriff obeyed the order ; a gallows was erected within that very hall of justice, and that same night, in the presence of the judge, the jury, and the people; Fwyall ascended the scaffold, cursing and blaspheming with his latest breath, spurning the consolations of the chaplain, and defying the angry God whom he was about to meet. His body was hung in chains at the mouth of the deserted mine.

So upon Owen, as well as Hugh, the wretched murderer, fell the curse of St. George's Well.

THE MONEY BANKS FIELD.

A TALE FOUNDED ON FACT.

I do love these ancient ruins.
We never tread upon them, but we set
Our foot upon some reverend history.

WEBSTER'S *Duchess of Malfy*.


It is now full thirty summers since, as a young artist, I spent some months of a long vacation in a pedestrian tour in North Wales.

I remember well, as though it were but yesterday, setting out with a full purse and a light heart, staff in hand, from the gate of old gabled Chester, through Wales to wend "my solitary way." I sailed without chart or compass,

following no more imperative guide than the caprice of the moment, or the wanderings of my own sweet will. Here I scaled a mountain, legend-haunted, there I visited an antique mansion. Here I lay like a crazed poet, musing in spite of myself for hours beside a fall, lulled by the throbbing plunge and the music-thunder of its waters; there I groped for the live-long day amid the rarely visited ruins of some grey-stoned, nameless abbey, repeopling it with the beings of the past, and summoning its white-clad chapter from their long, long sleep in the echoing tombs beneath my feet, before the tribunal of my mind. Now I strove, perched on some jutting crag, to realize the mountain-worship of the antediluvian races, or to shape spirits of the storm from the white mist that boiled up in smoking wreaths from the seething jaws of the bottomless pit below me. Now lying under the pinnacles of some ruined sea-tower, I rhapsodized from the riches of a brain, "new stuffed with old romance," the pe-

geantries and savage revelries once held in those Welsh halls now vaulted only by heaven.

Such were my reveries ; yet still more frequently, must I own it, loving as I do to espy Nature embosked in wildest solitude, fishing-rod in hand (a mere excuse), and some loved poet in my pocket, I strolled from my rustic inn and sallied forth like an early discoverer into an unknown country. Then, for hours, oblivious to the social frankness of my Welsh landlord, and the charms of his black-eyed daughter, I would follow the windings of some brawling mountain-stream, and led farther and farther by its chafing ripple, I strayed through rocky pass and wooded glen, till, with mind replete with scenes of beauty, and with pannier filled with such a goodly array of speckled trout as would have made honest Walton positively swoon for joy, I returned, weary in body, but elastic and refreshed in mind, to a good supper, and a cool-blanché and lavendered bed in my pleasant hostelrie of "The Three Salmons."



It was on a heart-warming, sunny morning in August, that I started for such a ramble as I have mentioned, from the odd little fishing-town of Barmouth, or Aber Maw, on the coast of Merionethshire, a corner of the world that the artist-tourist may remember, with its quaint houses perched upon a rock above the river, its white-sailed vessels, and its group of hatted women and stalwart fishermen enlivening the beach ; here, in the very heart of piscators' land, having pitched my tent, I had adventurously visited the adjacent lakes, the eleven tributary streams that empty their little urns into the sea, and the broad Mawddach, which, threading its devious way among the mountains, arrives at last, after passing many a fair spot, at the scattered town of Dolgelly, not


Making sweet music with the enamelled stones,
Giveth a gentle kiss to every sedge
He overtakes in his pilgrimage ;

but as a Welsh river should, flowing wildly
on its way past bold rocky promontories, there

clad with dark, star-proof woods, and here overshadowed by hills that were hid only with the thick purple blossoms of the heath flower, or the vari-coloured weavings of the rock-lichen.

But I had heard of Druids, and nothing would satisfy me but I must now visit the *Meini Gwyr Ardudwy*, or the obelisk stones that mark the grave of the heroes of *Ardudwy*; the Celtic ramparts of *Cors y Gedol*; the British camp of *Dinas Corddyn*; the holy circle of the Druids, called *Carneddi Hengwm*; and last, but before all, the great *Coeten Arthur*, or rock, denominated “*King Arthur’s Quoit*,” which every Welshman, and therefore every lover of the Welsh, amongst whom I enrol myself, is bound to believe was hurled thither by the semi-Homeric champion above named, all the long way from the blue peak of *Moelfre*, let alone the mark of the hero’s grasp upon its lichened surface.

But should I forget *Harlech*, towering, in its pride of strength, upon the rock that overlooks the sea. I made a long day’s visit to



that ruined fortalice of the princes of North Wales, enjoying from its walls the distant views of the vast Snowdon range, upreared, like Titan ramparts, between me and England. I strayed, too, down to the broad sand-beach, now far distant from the castle, whose lower walls the sea once washed, and, proceeding some miles farther along the shore, I seated myself upon the Sarn Badrig, or St. Patrick's Causeway, an old sea-bulwark, mentioned, I believe, in the "Triads," probably erected by some ancient Cambrian king, and which still runs defyingly into the deep; and as I listened to the murmur of the waves, I thought over wild legions of barbarian chieftains and cities beneath the sea. I was so much delighted, indeed, with Harlech and its stone-built cottages, that I came thither several times from Barmouth, and on one of those occasions entered into conversation with the old seneschal who shows the castle to visitors—a life about as suggestive of mortality as a sexton's, and per-

haps equally perverted. My *cicerone* was an intelligent old man, and delighted me with the warmth of his manner and the interest he seemed to take in the ruins and the legends.

Finding me a ready listener, he used to tell me that the oldest wall, which he pointed to as he spoke, was of the time of Malgwyn Gwynedd, Prince of North Wales, who flourished in the year 530, a remote date, which is but yesterday to genealogists, who put Noah himself at least half-way down their genealogical tree. Here, too, he said, lived Bronwen, "the white-necked," a proud beauty, who, being struck by her savage husband, lit up the flames of civil war in the land, and added another item to those three evil blows which the "Triads" say were the ruin of Britain. But the stronghold where the wearers of the golden torques and the amber wreath have ruled fell into decay, like all sublunary things, and was not rebuilt till the conquest of Edward, the lion-

hearted, who held it as a point suitable to repress the barbarians of the interior, it being adapted by its situation to receive succours from the sea. There the arch rebel, Owen Glendower, stood a siege, and thither the "She-Wolf of France" came with her jewels and treasure after the slaughter at Northampton, ere she fled to France and to the arms of old King René, the minstrel king; for Harlech was the last tower that held out for falling Lancaster and the king too good for earth, just as it afterwards was the last standing-place for the Stuarts.

The old man seemed to love the place, which was to him a court-yard of the tomb. His pale thin cheek glowed with pleasure as he leant over the ruined wall and looked across the still blue expanse of the Irish Sea, that seemed, as the poets say, like an uncovered mine of gold veiled beneath the last rays of a noonday's sun. With the air of a veteran he would point me out the triple defences of the tower-crowned rock, the gloomy

strength of the dungeons, and the great breach which one Mytton (whose family is still existing in Cheshire) made, and which forced the brave Major Pennant and his brave little band to yield the hold.

Then my old friend showed me the sally-port which once opened on the beach, but now on meadows, since the sea that bore hither the English vessel and the Danish galley has retreated, like a generous foe, from an old disarmed knight, where the warrior, from the mast head, has often fought hand-to-hand with the bowmen on the battlement of the lowest wall.

“Oh, it was a famous strong place,” said the seneschal, “when our own kings ruled the mountain land; and many a tough bout of war these walls of ours have beaten back. I recollect a story now that I heard long ago, of a knight who once kept these towers, and shouted out to his besiegers, who shook their long spears far below, that he had once held a castle in France (it was in the time of

Edward of Caernarvon) so long that every old woman in Potoo (Poictou) talked of it; and that if he hadn't good terms he would now hold Harlech till every old woman in Wales talked of it."

I smiled, as in duty bound, at the naïve effrontery of the knight—

Whose bones are dust,
And his good sword rust;

and charmed with the castle and its situation, and not less with my grey-headed friend, I seated myself by his side on the broad stones of the terrace wall, and began to enter into conversation with him about the distinctive beauties of Dolgelly, near which town I found he had been born.

"I was there but yesterday," I said, "fishing down the Mawddach, amusing myself by collecting legends of the country from any fishermen and quarrymen with whom I met, and inquiring the names of places in your own beautiful language—of one place with a romantic name—the Money Banks, I think

they called it—I could, however, get no distinct explanation.”

“Oh !” replied my friend, eagerly, “you mean a retired, peaceful spot, not far from Cymmer Abbey, in the vale of Llanelltyd, a lovely field just by the monks’ orchard ?”

“The very same,” I replied.

“I know it well,” he said, “and have reason to remember it well, for with it is connected a story of singular interest.”

“Pray, relate it,” I replied, in my blandest tones, and with all the eagerness of a tourist ; “and let us sit beneath the shadow of this half-ruined bastion, for here the sea-breeze tempers the heat.”

“It is some forty years ago,” he commenced, seeing me a willing auditor, “since I laboured as a stripling on my father’s farm at the abbey you just mentioned. It is a beautiful spot, that little vale, with its wooded hills, its mountains crowned by the twin peak of Cader Idris, with its crown of mist, its thundering cataracts, and its peaceful mea-

dows, through which the little Maw, unchecked by rock or crag, glides so sweetly. I had no great love for those things then, but still I felt a secret pleasure in their sight, which, I suppose, stole unconsciously to my heart. Almost the first tales I can remember hearing at my father's house were about the old abbey. I can recall, as if it were but yesterday, the glowing of my heart when some old crone told me of the noble monk who betrayed your English king, Henry, to the ambushed army of the indomitable Llywelin ap Jorworth. The thought of those things coloured my life, and followed me forth into the scenes around the farm, where, as I lay by the river side, watching my sheep, I would dream of the great Welsh princes who founded the little chapel whose ruins were beside me, or would picture to myself the white-robed monks angling in the stream on which I gazed. My own bedroom, indeed, had been, if tradition said true, either the abbot's chamber, or the refectory of the order; and although I knew little enough

of the manners of those old times, I knew sufficient to enable me to people it with beings and scenes of the past, for in the past more than the present I lived, moved, and had my being. I could not have been more than thirteen, when one day, as I was busied in clearing the overgrown ivy from one of the long lancet windows of the chapel, I heard a rustling sound behind me, which made me turn and rest for a moment to gaze on the intruder. It was a youth, fantastically dressed, and wearing a square college cap, bound round with a garland of laurel; he was pale and careworn, and his eye wore a vacant, wild, and restless expression. He did not speak to or even notice me, but went on, stooping over the shivered fragments of a tomb which he was examining, and which, with a solemn air, he cleared of the lichen and moss which encrusted it. He then attempted to fit together the scattered fragments; seeing him unable to lift one of these from its extreme weight, I went and helped him to raise it to


complete his toil. He seemed pleased, but did not speak ; and, finding no shape or form resulting from his labours, he walked on. I often saw him after this, and found, on inquiring of my father, that he was an idiot, the only son of his mother, and she a widow. Her large family estate, at the death of her husband, owing to the mismanagement, or perhaps knavery, of a steward, had now dwindled down till scarcely a field was left around the old mansion which she could call her own. But what cared she for this, when her son was carrying off every honour at Oxford—was the pride of his college—and was affording promise of rising one day to the highest distinction in the law, the profession for which he was destined ? His natural ambition was spurred on by the poverty which drags down the little mind.”

“ Was his name Penlyn ? ” I exclaimed. “ Wasn’t he seized with a brain fever on the eve of taking his degree ? I think I have

heard his history mentioned by Oxford men as a warning against over-application ? ”

“ He was, poor fellow ! ” continued the old man ; “ and from that fever, which kept him for weeks suspended over the brink of the grave, he awoke to worse than death—to helpless idiocy. He was taken to Italy, but all was of no avail ; he seemed to pine for his native hills, so they brought him home ; and the servants of the big house wept, as I have heard, to see their young master return in so pitiful a state. His only pleasure was to put on his Oxford gown, and roam about alone among the fields.

“ It nearly broke his mother’s heart at first, but she lived through it, and, after a time, she bore the sore blow with a holy patience, which only Heaven could have sent her. She nursed him like an infant, and would have tended him with the ever-watchful care of a guardian angel, had not another grief awaited her to wean her heart still more from earth to heaven. But it was her father’s will, who



was in heaven, and she bore this too. For he would not now rest, as before, in the grand but gloomy chambers of his father's house, but would hurry out to the mountains, where he would lie on his back on some cliff, and watch the passing clouds, as if he was conversing with the angels, for hours together. Often he would wander down to the beach and speak to the waves, as if he was addressing a stormy multitude; but oftener still he used to stroll amongst the abbey ruins, and spend half the day in digging up the chapel floor, in scraping the moss from some carved corbel, or in examining the wall stones, as if in search of some hidden spring.


“Some said this arose from the thought of his mother's poverty weighing upon his heart; others, that it was but a half-effaced remembrance of his old enthusiasm for Gothic architecture; but to me there was always something intensely touching in seeing one whose soul was already in heaven so intent on the past, when to him the present was but

dark, undefined night, and the future an unknown country.

“Here, even at the early dawn, I would find him kneeling on the cold earth, the tears of joy running down his poor pale cheeks, as the sun, to him a newly-created world, rose slowly over the east window.

“But still more often, the dreams of an ambition, lost for ever, would seem to press on his thoughts, and he would sit on the river’s banks till nightfall drew on, gazing with lack-lustre eyes on a book in some strange character—Hischylus, I think I heard his mother call it” (I nodded assent), “which he always kept in his bosom.

“And I’ve known my father, when he’s been sitting there, striving, as it were, against fate, turn away his head to hide the large tears running down his cheeks; for, indeed, it was a pitiful sight, and my father felt for him the more because he knew he was the last of an old stock descended from the King of Powisland, and known half the country over.




“Mr. Penlyn was always silent, and seemed, with knitted brow, ever trying to collect his scattered and wandering thoughts, and to resume the suspended projects of his earlier life. More than once an old college friend came to see him, then looked thoughtful, bent down his head, as if trying to remember faces he had seen before, smiled faintly, again rested his eyes on his book, and wandered forth on a ramble.

“I often found him bending over the water, as if holding communion with some spirit within its depth, or in our sunny orchard, stretched out beneath a shady tree, one hand under his head, and the other clasping his *Hischylus*, still open, to his heart.”

“I think,” said I, apologising for the interruption—“I think he was employed in a translation of *Æschylus* when the hand of heaven smote him.”

“Very like, sir. Perhaps, as I was saying, heaven granted him glimpses, in those short slumbers, of eternal peace; for if he awoke



suddenly at the sound of my foot, or the loud song of a bird in some adjoining tree, he would start up, fall on his knees, and point in rapture to the sky.

“All these things made a deep impression on my boyish mind. I soon learnt to regard him with a love mixed with awe, and I would bring him food into the field, or help him as he toiled at his useless digging. He too soon learnt to know, and even to love me. He would run to meet me, wait for me as I went afield, and, occasionally, even call for me at my father’s house. My mother always kept a vacant seat for him, for she used to say, good woman, that it made her heart bleed to see one well born so grievously afflicted. He even kept his mattock in ‘a corner of our room, from whence he would take it at regular and never-forgotten hours.

“Such were his habits when I first knew him. He loved me, he knew not why. I loved him, as a boy might an infant brother. It was just such an evening as this—I re-

member it well. We were all seated at our evening meal, when he entered, looking more anxious and thoughtful than usual ; a wild light, I thought, seemed to gleam in his soulless eyes.

“ ‘ God be with thee, Mr. Penlyn,’ said my father, respectfully bowing and rising from his chair to make room for him at the board.

“ ‘ Be seated, good Mr. ——. I know not your name ; but ’tis well. I only came to borrow a crowbar and an axe ; for I dreamt last night of a treasure under the chapel window, and I go to prove the truth of God’s voice.’

“ An involuntary smile crept over my father’s face ; but he was a warm-hearted man, and he stifled it at the birth.

“ ‘ Owen,’ he said, in a low voice, to me, ‘ follow Mr. Penlyn, my lad, and help him to carry the tools—humour him, poor fellow !’

“ In silence I followed him to the chapel. The sun was just sinking in the west, and shed a solemn light over the grey ruin.

“ My friend paused for a moment, as if in


recollection, and then, in a deep voice, said to me, pointing to a spot beneath a half-defaced rood-cross carved on the wall, 'Twas here where the finger on the tomb pointed to me. In God's name, and the great statue's, dig!' And so saying, he struck the crowbar into the ground with great violence.

"It might have been that my mind was nervously excited, for I fancied the earth sounded hollow, and echoed to the stroke. We worked steadily on, and in half an hour's hard toil had dug a hole of some depth.

" 'My bar strikes something hard,' I cried.

"A few minutes more, I reached and drew forth a rusty iron casket of large size, half decayed by time, and through whose broken side streamed forth a shower of silver coin. We both shouted for joy, and my poor friend clutched a handful in rapture. 'All is over,' was his cry, and 'Penlyn is restored!'

"Twas all disclosed. It had been the thought of his life—one that, perhaps, driving



him to insanity, had survived even the wreck of reason—to raise his mother from poverty, and restore the ruined house of Penlyn.

“A few more strokes of the pickaxe disclosed a small vaulted recess—perhaps originally connected by subterranean passages with the abbot’s lodging—in which were several gold vessels of curious workmanship and great value, probably buried there at the time of the dissolution of monasteries. My astonishment was unbounded; but Penlyn seemed to have anticipated the truth of his heaven-sent dream. I had come but to humour the caprice of an ‘innocent,’ and here was I utterly confounded by results exceeding all that a sober judgment could have anticipated.

“I need hardly describe the surprise of my father, or the wonder of the townsmen, who were inclined to see in it something ‘passing man’s judgment.’ The event, to a superstitious mind, seemed to be like a red comet, from the heavens foreboding the future; my father himself refused any share of such

heaven-sent treasure, and only kept a few of the smaller coins as a remembrance of so extraordinary an event.

“Again the family of Penlyn looked up, and again the broad lands widened round the old mansion. But my poor friend drooped after this, as if blasted by the communication of the secret from heaven; he drooped, he grew weaker and weaker; but still he visited daily his old haunts, and strolled, with fond interest, round the scene of the treasure-finding.

“The early days of January, 1785, were wild and stormy; one night in particular the wind roared with surging thunder among the leafless trees, and our house shook to its very foundation in the hurricane. I went early to the chapel, and there, beneath the ruins of a fallen wall, his mattock still clutched in his small white hand, and the well-known Æschylus, all wet with rain, near him, lay my poor friend. He was quite dead; but a smile played about his lips, as if reason

had returned as death smote his frail body and sent it unsummoned before its merciful Judge. May we meet again in heaven! His body lies under a plain stone in Dolgelly churchyard."

The old man wiped a tear from his eye as he concluded, and I, unwilling to stifle the generous emotion of the o'erfraught heart, slipped a coin into his hand (I won't tell you how much, reader), and set forth a sadder, and I trust, therefore, a wiser man, for Bar-mouth.

THE SEXTON'S BROTHER.

It was bitter cold; the spider was frozen in his web, and the cowering bird glued to the ivy-bough.

The very dead were frozen in their shrouds.

Well, they didn't care for that at the "Duke of Marlborough's," on New Year's-eve, 1760, not they. Still the wind over snow sounds drearily even to those who sit round a fire, and though logs do blaze in a glow of crimson, against which still unconsumed fragments stand out dark and sharp, like the black roof-trees of a burning house, when a single flake of snow finds its way through smoke and flame, and hisses in the little

fiery gulf below, it does make one shudder at the death and desolation without.

How the drifts are piling up over the gravestones in the quiet churchyard, darkening the old kings of the painted windows, and substituting a poor pale shadow for the crimson sunset stain that loves to linger all the noon long about the half-defaced brass of the De Tracys in the chancel, like a memory of blood shed long ago, or like those dusky spots that blot the boards of the long corridor of the Moat House.

The moon upon snow, good lack, is a dreary sight, but there wasn't even that to-night; for, if there did linger a star or two, you couldn't well see them till you looked about; and the stars didn't light the night, for it was only the glimmer of the snow, that even in the darkest places, in thick coverts and under matted trees, cast a pale reflexion on all surrounding things. 'Twas like Nature in her grave-clothes, so the village

crones said, and laughed; for even life, hope, and infancy remind them only of the grave, how much more, then, this very ghastly image of the face of death!

The cold wind drifted the snow, which rose slowly and silently as the waters of a new deluge over the foot-prints of man and bird, twisting up in white columns like smoke when the north-east caught up a handful of it and cast it away with a howling laugh as his deadly gift to man. For the snow, though beautiful and fair, and of the very colour of the May blossoms, brings but suffering and death to man; though it shelters the bud, piles warm over the flower, and hastens on the spring, it slays the shepherd in the fold and the watchman in his sheltered nook. It smiles and slays; yes, the angel of the snow is passionless and cruel, mocking at prayer, for she is the youngest daughter of winter and the white death. And up through the snow—for foul things will float up—peered still the dead fingers of

autumn—the withered reeds and the last leaves red and brown.

It drew colder towards midnight ; then the very owl was chilled deep in the sheltering ivy, the sleeper's breath froze upon the cottage pane, the child awoke crying, and the weary peasant tossed restless in a dream of men lost in snow gullies, and buried where they fell by the snow that slew them. The dog howled in the kennel, and the cock crew from his perch, awoke by the light of the snow, and rather wishing than believing it were the dawn.

The deep footprints round the village forge, where the idlers had crowded at nightfall to warm themselves at the sight of the ascending blaze, to rejoice in the roar of the bellows, or to wonder at the perpetual firework of the sparks, and crimson their blue faces in the warm light, grew fainter, and still the snow fell on, as if it would never cease till it had quite buried the world. There was still but one uncovered

track, and that led to the village inn. There, round the kitchen fire, sit the dignitaries of the village: the tailor, a thin, wizened fellow, you may know him by the needle and thread stuck in his coat sleeve. He is warming his lantern jaws over the steam of a pot of buttered ale, and is at present examining with a curious eye the deep cuff of the landlord's coat, which he proclaims "very curiously cut, and undoubtedly the work of a man of parts." By his side sits the blacksmith, who having just probed the fire, from the mere habit acquired in the stithy, is eyeing the poker enviously, with a look which seems to say, "If that's your cast-iron work, I could beat out better with my old hammer." Then there are half a dozen old farmers looming red through smoke-clouds; and, not to be overlooked even if you wished, is the landlord, a perfect butt, both as to size, shape, and capacity for holding liquor, with a face as red as a London sun in a fog.

Just opposite his old high-backed seat of honour, too, are the sexton and the schoolmaster, engaged in a controversy, which, having long existed in whispers, has at last risen above and silenced all the smaller circles of conversation, and merged them all into one. Both are lean, cadaverous-looking men; but the sexton being dressed in a faded black coat of the minister's, who has gone home about an hour ago, looks more angular and bony than the schoolmaster, who rejoices in an old brocade waistcoat of the squire's, glowing with a twining mass of faded yellow roses, as big as cabbages; very gorgeous for the dog-days, but, to say the least, somewhat chilling in cold winter.

"I tell thee what," said the schoolmaster, rather angrily for a man of his dignity, and the more angrily as he had just burnt his little finger in attempting to use it as a tobacco-stopper, "the story is a flat remnant of paganism and heathendom, and I'll never believe it. I say

again; gentlemen, does it sound like Christianity? ”

“Yes, yes,” said the sexton, a waspish little man, with a malicious mouth and hard-lined features, looking snappishly round at those he addressed, “it is true, as sure as the Pope’s in Rome.”

“Is what true?” said the landlord, suddenly roused from a reverie which had some affinity to sleep. “What is it that makes gossips quarrel over good ale, that should be the very milk of human kindness? Adzooks! let’s have no schism here.”

“Why, why, Master Nicholas, who believes that the white rose flowers under the snow, and a lot more stuff that King George should know of, will not credit me when I tell him that I—I, Griffin Denner, parish sexton, saw this night three years, with mine own eyes, a blue light playing round the coffin-plate of old Sir Robert Fortrose—such a light that I could read

the name by—and when I said a charm, and muttered the Lord's Prayer backwards, it disappeared, and left the vault in darkness. Haven't I heard my grandmother say a thousand times, that when the old baronet was buried they found his body the next night thrown out of the grave, and lying stiff and stark in its grave-clothes at the grave's edge, with the corpse's teeth set just as if he died in pain, yet he went off in a sleep, the waiting woman told me. Say what you like, there's a curse gone out 'gainst the family—there's a curse gone out 'gainst the family."

"Pooh!" said the schoolmaster, "nought but that curse we all suffer from—poverty."

"And a bitter curse it is," said one who had not before spoken—a morose-looking man, the brother of the sexton, and who lived with him as a poor dependent, having been, if report said true, a highwayman till a chance shot from some traveller's pistol lamed him for life; "and there's only one greater, and

that's riches, though I should be glad to bear it." Then he laughed savagely, rousing himself for a moment from a now habitual manner of crawling and hypocritical servility. "We sell everything in this age—our own lives and our daughters' virtue. Money!—'tis the first thought of the son by the bed of his dying father, and makes him bear the loss with resignation." And, as the man spoke, such a fiendish sneer distorted his features that those who saw him shuddered. "With money, a leper loves life," he continued, "though his brain be seared with fever and his hands be red with blood; without it man is but a thing fit to chain up as you would a bull-dog to snap at beggars, tear thieves, and to feed with the broken scraps that you cannot yourself eat."

"Hold thy tongue!" said the sexton, with the air of an offended superior. "A man of good parts need never want ample food and a comfortable home while a relation or a friend lives."

"The leavings of plates that the dogs re-

ject, and the scanty crumbs of a miser's table, are always to be had."

"Robert! Robert!" said the sexton, "thou knowest that I keep from thee nought, for we all know that 'tis of thyself thou speakest. I will not bear this ingratitude—this passionate humour—from one whom my own hands feed. Thou knowest I am poor and old; yet I toil willingly on, and divide my pittance with thee. A few nights' less carding, an honest life, and thou wouldst have been rich and free, sound in body, pure in mind, and clean of hand."

"And who art thou, miserable carcass-robber!" said the cripple, as he limped violently from his seat, throwing down the table and scalding the thin tailor with a jug of mulled ale as he advanced, as if he would lift his hand against the grey head of his brother, "to talk of clean hands and pure life?—filcher of rings from corpses' fingers—pilferer of grave linen—profaner of the peace of death!" Then, suddenly, as if checking this paroxysm

of rage by a sudden spasm, he lifted his fallen chair from the ground, and held out his hand to his brother. "I cannot help this violence of temper; but forgive me, William, for I have done thee wrong."

Without a word the sexton accepted the proffered hand, and shook it warmly.

"It wants but five minutes to midnight," he said, after a short pause; "brother, we must to the belfry to ring the year in with the Fortrose knell; so, make ready."

After a few minutes of reluctant lingering the two brothers, so quickly reconciled, rose and left the room.

"Say what you like," said the landlord, looking up after a long interval of thought, "I don't like that brother of Denner's; as sure as I live he'll make a bad end of it. If he doesn't stretch a rope some time or another, may I never score a pint of ale again."

"'Tis a harsh saying," replied the school-

master, "and hath less of good-nature in it than thy ordinary talk."

The conversation, for a moment hushed by the brothers' quarrel, now rose louder than ever, as fire is kindled fiercer by the wind that for a moment has beaten down its flame.

"And what knell is this?" said a man more wizen-looking than even the tailor, no less a person than the village barber, a man with several days' beard growing on his chin, with peer-eyes, and an anxious, hen-pecked face, a great retailer and a no less eager recipient of news. "'Tis a strange hour and season for a knell."

"Why, if thee weren't a stranger, Master Winkin," replied the landlord, "thee could never ask about such an old tale as that. Didst never hear how old Sir Robert Fortrose, in a hard night's drinking, on just such a night as this—a new year's night—ran his only son through the heart in a drunken quarrel, as they both sat alone at midnight over their wine; and when day broke, and the servants

came into the room, they found the grey old father raving mad, moping and moaning in his chair at the head of the old table, cursing at his son for a poor milksop, because he wouldn't pledge him in another bottle; while not far from him, with his hands spread over the table, and his head hidden, lay the dead son, the dark-clotted blood frozen and fastening him to the board, and the old man's fingers red with it, for it had trickled amongst the glasses."

"Ah! 'tis a sad story," said another auditor, dressed in a shabby livery, who had in his youth been a servant at the Fortroses', "and there's no human hand will ever wash that stain out of the boards: a many a morning I have rubbed at it till my very heart ached, and as sure as there's fish in the sea, before nightfall it would break out again in a red rash. There's something not right about that old house. When I was a boy I used to be frightened into shivers—and yet I was a sprightly boy—to see the old portraits


following me with their eyes, or at night to see the fire flames twinkling and forming in strange figures, dogged by shadows over the wainscot. Lord ! often on a windy night, when I have had to come alone down the long north corridor to put up the shutters in the red parlour, as the room was called, I've fancied I've heard shrieks and gurgling sounds, and the jingle of glasses, and then a drip, drip, like blood upon the floor. Lord ! I've stood there saying a prayer, and afraid to open the door, ay, half an hour."

"But tell that story, William, about the key-hole," said the landlord, patronizingly, trying to obtain a share in the glory of the lion of the evening.

"Oh, it's a mere nothing," said William, looking down with a smile of gratified vanity, and repeating, in a very slow voice, as a hint of its importance, "nothing—at—all."

"The story ! the story !" cried the whole company, eagerly, drawing in a closer circle

round the quondam butler, who, filling his pipe with the artful, coy delay of a practised tactician, began, in a much longer story than we have room for, to narrate that, on one particular occasion—it was a December evening, about five o'clock—the family were abroad, and he was left alone to take care of the house. He had been sitting before a great wooden fire in the hall, watching the black logs glow into red, rib into fiery gaps, and then fall away into white ashes, till, getting tired of this reflective but rather monotonous amusement, he got up and looked at the sunset; he saw the deep cloudy blue change into molten gold, and then settle into a melancholy grey; and at the same instant that the sun went down, a low, dirging wind sprang up, and as he heard it a strange cloud of melancholy fell over him, although he was naturally a cheerful youth, and the best dancer in the village—here he held out his thin leg and patted it—and he tried to whistle “Lillibulero,” but it wouldn't do, so he



thought he'd just go upstairs, and, like a boy's curiosity, as it was, look through the different rooms that he had never yet entered, to see if all was right and divert his spirits. Then clapping on a laced cocked hat which hung on a pair of antlers in the hall, and seizing an old gold-headed crutch-cane, he took it into his head to fancy himself for a moment the squire, and the old ghost-house his own. So up he went slowly the old oak stairs that led from the hall to the gallery of the bedrooms. All of a sudden the thought of that dreadful night struck him ; he felt as if a hand of ice were laid angrily on his shoulder ; but when he turned and looked fearfully round, there was nothing—fool that he was ! of course there was nothing. Then he thought of how they bore the body up those very steps, how the blood dripped from it as they bore it up, and how the madman hollowed and shouted with laughter till the hall rang again at the dolt who could not carry three bottles, and when

he saw the blood said it was a burning shame to see such good Burgundy wasted. Still he tried to dismiss those thoughts, and on he went to the old state bedroom, but everything wore such a funereal aspect there that his very blood turned cold. The chill of the damp room struck him like a vault, and as he opened the first creaking door the dusty black hearse-like plumes on the huge crimson brocade bed waved mournfully. As he entered rapidly he thought he saw a white shadow pass across the old mirror that stood on the faded gilt toilette-table, and though there was no wind that could be felt the pictures flapped on the walls as when a strong gust enters the room. At this moment a door in a distant part of the house slammed violently, a bell rang in the state chamber;—he could bear it no longer; he hurried down, dropping his hat as he shut the door, but afraid to return even a step to pick it up, and fancying, as he hurried down the long corridor, that he heard light footsteps behind

him, and the stiff rustling of silk gowns ; and as he passed each door, from which seemed to come low voices, he trembled lest one should open with a burst and disclose some hideous sight. Then as he was putting his first footstep on the stair, he remembered that the old amber cane that dangled by a thong of perfumed leather from his wrist was supposed by legend to have belonged to the murdered man, and although he held it not, it seemed as if a bloody sweat still hung about it as he grasped the thongs, so he threw it down in horror, and it rolled with a clatter to the hall below, strangely, as he thought, to his astonishment and horror, snapping in two as it touched the marble floor. Having picked up the fragments, to be carefully repaired at his leisure, an irresistible curiosity must then needs impel him to peep through the keyhole of the Red Parlour, which opened from this very hall at the end of a small dark passage ;—creeping on tiptoe, he looked in, and when he looked in, to his indescribable heart-sickening

terror, he saw another eye, bright and luminous, looking through at him from within ; when he listened the death-bell rang in his ear, the wind seemed like voices wailing over the dead ; and as the door suddenly flew open and showed no one within, he swooned in terror. When he came to it was a dark night, and a dozen servants with lights were bending over him, for the family had suddenly returned while he lay in his trance.

As he told this strange detail of the fears of a superstitious serving-man, full to repletion of family legend and "auld world" story, the death-bells instituted by the Fortrose family to be rung annually on New Year's-eve, and to ring which muffled peal the two brothers had sallied out an hour since, boomed out on the cold dark night, adding a deeper melancholy to the sad relation of family crime and its dreadful retribution.

The bell had long ceased, and the greater part of the fireside circle had gone—all but a few jolly bachelors who feared no domestic

chidings, with the landlord, and a few veterans who never retired while there was a friend to season the cup or pass the tankard, when a low faint knock was heard at the outer door.

"Is that a knock?" said the wizened tailor, timorously, "or the w—w—ind?"

"The wind," said the landlord, stoutly, knocking the ashes from his pipe with ten times louder noise than usual.

"There it is again!" cried the tailor, looking over his shoulder.

Yes! there it was again: a low, feeble knock, more like a death watch, or a dying beggar, than any noise a human being's hand would make.

"It's an omen," said one.

"Somebody should go and see what it is," cried another.

"It may be robbers," shivered a third, as if he felt a draught.

"It's the wind," said the landlord, decisively; "the wind is in the habit of a-doing

it." The conversation proceeded for some minutes, when again came a low knocking, a little louder than before, such as a bough makes when the wind beats it in a sort of rude cadence against a door or window-pane.

"Man or devil, here goes!" said the landlord, provoked by finding it wasn't the wind after all; and snatching a candle from the table with one hand, he grasped the huge kitchen-poker in the other, though not one of his suggestive advisers ventured to follow the daring adventurer.

In a moment his cry of mingled horror and surprise drew them all from their chairs, and in an instant afterwards he entered the inn kitchen bearing the body of an old and apparently dying man in his arms, and placing him in his own seat, he began to chafe his frozen limbs with all the assiduity of a kind old nurse.

"Good God, it's the sexton!" cried half a dozen voices in chorus.

The old man lay like a child helpless in the

landlord's arms, insensible, his eyes closed, and his mouth opening and shutting like that of a dying man, while blood oozed from a large wound in his forehead. With great difficulty they forced a little brandy down his throat, and, after some minutes of assiduous care, the old man began slowly to open his eyes, look round wildly, as if his reason were somewhat shaken, and mutter half inarticulate words—"Spare me—I'm an old man—help!" Then, as he revived more and more, he rose slowly and feebly to his feet, and, lifting his hand to the wound in his forehead, exclaimed, "God be thanked, I'm safe!"

The story of his wonderful escape is soon narrated. On leaving the inn, he walked as quickly as he could towards the church, carrying the lantern, and leaving his brother to follow at a slower pace. He observed that he loitered behind, and muttered words that he could not hear; and when he turned the light of the lantern upon him, he turned away his face with a curse, as if the

light dazzled and annoyed him. They passed through the churchyard without a word, except that he observed under the yew-tree a long shallow grave, recently dug, and almost full of snow, but he made no remark upon it to his brother, who had walked quickly on, and had already succeeded in "raising" the bell and commencing the accustomed knell. They had finished, and he was complaining of the cold, when he suddenly saw, by a rapid movement of a shadow on the belfry wall, his brother's hand raising a mattock to brain him. He turned round, but before he could utter a cry or seize a spade that stood by the wall to defend himself, he received a blow on the forehead and fell senseless. He awoke with a sense of suffocation and of a dense weight pressing on his face and limbs. He was buried alive! He tried to scream, but no sound came. He struggled stronger, in all the agony of despair. He felt the shallow earth yield to his efforts; despair lent him strength; his head was freed, and

his hands once slowly drawn forth, he gradually released the superincumbent weight that pressed upon him. After resting for a long time, clinging for support to the yew and the tombstones, he had crawled out of the churchyard and made his way to the nearest house—the inn.

Many were the groans, sighs, and exclamations of indignation and of pity with which this narrative of a half-completed fratricide was listened to; deep and long was the consultation as to what steps should be taken to track the murderer and bring him to justice. At last they resolved, as the night was already far spent and the day well-nigh at hand, to bind up the old man's wound, wrap him in blankets, place him in the warmest nook beside the fire, and while he refreshed his exhausted frame by sleep, to watch silently for the first dawn of day as the signal to sally forth in pursuit of the wretched object of their deserved hatred.

An hour or two had passed, and the old man,

worn out with the fatigue of his struggle for life, and exhausted by loss of blood from his wound, had sunk into a feverish and restless sleep, broken by sudden starts, horrible groans, and broken exclamations. Thin grey streaks had already barred the east, and were kindling into minute veins of fire. The dawn had already commenced, and the landlord had just given the signal for starting, having left the old man in the care of the thin tailor, whose ardour for the pursuit had gradually oozed out at the thoughts of a day's work lost and the chance of, perhaps, a life-and-death struggle with a desperate man.

The landlord had armed his party, and they were still circling lingeringly, and whispering around the fire, as the landlord unbarred the door, when a loud hurried knock attracted their attention. The landlord threw open the door: it was "the Sexton's brother," pale and trembling. With an air of affected gaiety he bid the landlord good morning, and asked him what news was stirring.

"Very strange news," said the landlord, in a deep hollow voice, as he dragged, rather than led, the questioner into the room with an affected merriment, his companions having instinctively, at the sound of his voice, gathered in a circle round the fire, so as to hide the sleeping man. "But what ails thee, man?" he said, clutching him by the collar in a sort of savage wonder, which the unsuspecting man took for blunt jocularity, "why, thy grizzled hair has turned grey since we last met."

Ere the wretched man could answer, and while he was still stammering out his own ignorance of the fact, a sight appeared which was as blasting to him as if the dawn of the day of judgment had then suddenly reddened in the heavens, for the circle that surrounded the fire suddenly giving way, the sick man, wrapped in a white sheet, which had been thrown over his blankets, and with a white bandage surrounding his brow, stained here and there with blood, arose and stood before him.

For an instant only the murderer stared at

his intended victim as if an angel had descended from the sky, his eyes almost leaping from their sockets, and glaring with incipient madness; the next, he uttered one shriek and fell dead upon the floor. The blood gushing from his mouth and nostrils told too plainly that a blood-vessel broken had occasioned his death. As he fell, some pieces of gold coin rolled from his pocket, declaring at once the object of the contemplated crime and the fruitlessness of his guilt.

For what object the murderer came to the inn on the morning after the perpetration of his crime could never be ascertained. It is, however, supposed that, after the dreadful scene in the churchyard, he had returned to his brother's house, broken open a chest—as it was, indeed, afterwards found—laden himself with the spoil, and hastened forth on the road to the town; but the way was across fields, and the snow had buried all the usual landmarks. Fear, the agony of a tormenting conscience, and repentance of the crime, had destroyed his memory,


and rendered him vacillating and thoughtless as a child. He had walked round in a circle without knowing it, and when day broke, found himself not far from the very spot where he had set out—so, at least, it was conjectured by the footprints tracked over the snow. Once, it appeared, he had sat down, as if to die, but the desire of life was too strong, and he arose and went on. That unaccountable impulse that impels murderers to their ruin drove him, it is further conjectured, to knock at the door of that very inn where himself and his brother had been happy inmates but a few hours since.

Avarice, heightened by a rankling hatred, and superstitious terror suddenly paralysing a mind already shaken by a night of conflicting passions, were sufficient motives to impel a bad heart to crime, and, indeed, ample causes by which to explain this sudden retribution. The Sexton's brother was buried in the very resting-place that he had prepared for another.

SIDMOUTH'S STORY.

INTRODUCTION TO THE LITTLE BLACK BOX.

ANOTHER month, and two more men besides Sidmouth were affected with snow blindness, and had to adopt crape spectacles, which soon relieved them. A week after this dissemination of the disorder, Captain Beaver served out crape spectacles (of which we had luckily a good store from that very excellent optician's nearly opposite the Admiralty), and ordered all the crew, officers included, to wear them. The dreadful disease Siderfin, who had been in Egypt, considered very analogous to ophthalmia, and attributed it to the changes




of temperature experienced in going from the ship to the ice coast.

A few days after this two men began also to complain of their gums, and showed symptoms of unmistakable scurvy. This we soon abated by doses of lemon essence, and by having some mustard and cress in the cabin, which vegetables, mixed with the young leaves of peas that we succeeded in inducing to sprout, soon relieved them.

About this time the Captain's dog, straying from the ship to associate with the wolves, who sometimes sent him home much bitten, was pursued to the ship by a polar bear, which a party of our men attacked with pikes and killed, first wounding him with a musket bullet, but losing the body, however, in a deep hole gnawn by seals in the ice.

A day or two after this we had a visit from a party of three Esquimaux, who were hunting musk bulls, of the scented flesh of which these people are singularly fond. They wore bundles of dirty fur, and conversed



as much by their gestures as by the English words, "with a will, pull away," the oaths, &c. that they picked up. We bought of them some canoe paddles, a bow and arrow, and a harpoon. The men would have made them drunk, but Captain Beaver forbade this, and even punished one of our main-top men for selling them his grog for some ptarmigan and seal's flesh, which he wanted to make a feast of with his messmates.

It was the night the Esquimaux left us that Sidmouth's clever historical story was begun to be read aloud to us by Captain Beaver—*ore rotundo*, as the saying is.

THE LITTLE BLACK BOX.

A STORY OF THE SHAFTESBURY PLOT.

CHAPTER I.

THE DARCYs OF CROW's NEST; OR, THE OLD CAVALIER SQUIRE AT HOME.

CROW's NEST was an old Tudor mansion, distant some twelve miles from Oxford, whose countless towers and steeples might, indeed, be seen on a clear day from a hill at one end of the Home Park. In the days of ruffs and farthingales the house had been the gathering point and centre of hospitality for the whole county: nor did Queen Elizabeth,

when she visited the University and shire, forget to visit the home of the Darcys.

“More by token,” says the old family chronicle, whose veracity can be depended on, “her majesty dropped her silver fan, the gift of Sir F. Drake, into the moat, as she took the air one noon on the battlements of the Lady Tower; and a young page of the family, diving to recover it, was stricken on the head by a buttress of the turret, and so died, drawing tears from the eyes of her majesty at the extreme piteous and unhappy sight.” But the tall twisted chimneys that crowned the gables, though undiminished in number since those days of prosperity, served now for the most part only as snug receptacles for the nests of starlings and of daws.

From one or two shafts only, on the soft warm summer morning of which we write, ascended thin pillars of pale blue smoke, which gradually, though unbroken by the gentle wind, melted into the sunny air.

But the gilded vanes, bright as stars, still



twinkled as of yore against the blue sky, like guardian planets of the house, though warped and bent by the storms of many bygone winters ; almost, indeed, as brightly as when, long ago, Crow's Nest loomed at the early dinner hour of eleven through the fragrant clouds of smoke ascending from the royal banquet of Queen Bess. The windows of the north front, cold and leaden in the vapoury shade, contrasted singularly with those of the south side, which overlooked the garden, and which, glittering in the morning sun, now shone golden and metallic, as if belonging to some enchanted palace of El Dorado. On old deserted rooms, once trod by nobles—on faded figured hangings—on shelves of warped and dusty books and on embroidered beds of ponderous size, plumed like hearses, the sunlight fell with a calm consciousness of peace and joy. In this golden sea of light that bathed the old house, shadowed by so many sorrows, and sinking so rapidly into genteel pauperism, floated like vast coral trees rising through the

sunny ocean, the old avenue-elms, whose sable inhabitants, noisy and solemn as the congregation of a Puritan conventicle, had originally given their name to the manor-house. Their unceasing cawing filled the rooms with a slumberous murmur, that, while it cheered the mind with a sense of the vicinity of living things, soothed it like the whisper of a distant sea ; for though some of the birds were always absent, swooping down in long, low trails upon the dark new-turned plough-land of forty acres, or basking in the sun on the tender grass of the broad-oak meadows, there were always some respectable citizens who remained gossiping beside the nests—half idlers, half watchmen—discussing perhaps the fortunes of the young birds who had scarcely as yet left the egg, and certainly seen very little of the world.

Sir Richard Darcy, a crusader, was said to have built the original house of Crow's Nest ; and some grassy undulations in the park were pointed out as the lines of his old castle ramparts.

The second fortress had arisen in the days of

his grandson, who, returning from Cressy, devoted to rebuilding his stronghold the ransom of three French barons whom his stout axe had beaten down on that memorable field, and had erected his new keep on the site of the old chapel where the crusader's bones were resting; the foundation of which building consisted, tradition said, of earth brought from the Holy Land, in pursuance of a custom not unusual in those days of great faith and little science. The present mansion was, however, the work of Sir John Darcy, a courtier of Henry VIII., who chose him as a favourite chiefly because he stood six feet in his stockings, and had killed a French knight of gigantic stature in a tournament on the "Field of the Cloth of Gold." His cognizances and proud motto—"Fight on," under a gashed hand, holding a broken sword bedropped with blood, gules—could still be seen on the square keystone of the gateway leading into the base-court, in old time the chief entrance to the house, till his son, Sir

Walter Darcy, in a fit of irrestrainable loyalty, blocked up the arch, which his queen swore had been disgraced by his father's marching through it at the head of fifty hagbuteers to join the northern Pilgrimage of Grace, and made the northern door, by which Elizabeth had entered Crow's Nest, henceforth the chief approach to the moated mansion.

The ground-plan of Crow's Nest was simple. It consisted of two courts—the base-court, with the blocked-up gatehouse, surrounded by the stable, smith's forge, and all those offices usual in feudal houses, which were, indeed, small villages in themselves. Fowls strutted about it, proud and despotic as sultans, followed by their chattering harems and attendant courtiers, eyeing their scarlet wattles in the mirrors of the stable-pails, while over their heads flew about white whirls of pigeons. Here Sir Robert's hawks were fed, and his hounds kenneled. A huge pair of antlers indicated the entrance to the stable; the grassy stones leading to the second door

showed that it had been long disused. A second gateway, through a clock-house, led into the inner court, round which rose the brick wall and gable roof of the Tudor mansion.

A door to the right of the gateway, as we enter here, leads to Sir Robert's smoking-room, and a passage from thence to the long dining-chamber, now seldom used, that extends along the whole of the south front, and from this room a covered cloister brings you into the immense kitchen. A low arch to the left is the entrance to the chapel, at the end of which is the drawing-room. On the east side is the hall, with a door at one end leading to the buttery. The house is entered from without by a flight of steps leading from the terrace into the porch, and so into the hall ; over which is the queen's room, still religiously kept sacred, and a small oratory, or painted closet, to the left, which is appropriated to the use of the fair Mabel Darcy, the daughter of the present proprietor.

The gardens of Crow's Nest are a sad relic of faded splendour. Clipped yew-hedges, still retaining traces of the fantastic shapes of birds and beasts into which they were once cut and clipped by scientific gardeners, now, thanks to indignant nature, have recovered the wild luxuriance of their aboriginal state, and are intersected by weed-covered walks and flower-beds fast relapsing into shapeless fallow, but still sprinkled by a few straggling flowers, which feebly assert their aristocratic birthright, just as a poor gentleman of the time might have endeavoured to make up for broken elbows and threadbare waistcoat by a knot of new ribbons fluttering at his sword-belt or on his hat.


The inner garden was distinguished by the Darcys by the name of "Queen Elizabeth's Walk," because there Her Majesty, says the old chronicle aforesaid, still preserved in the family library, "did graciously, and with a most heavenly smile, pluck, with her own royal hand, two roses from neighbouring and inter-

twining bushes, one white and the other red ; and putting them into either bosom, thanked God that He had, in His mercy, vouchsafed, in the person of her grandfather, to end such senseless bloody wars as those of old between the houses of York and Lancaster."

In the midst of this garden—now a mere tangle of hedges, where thrushes, blackbirds, and nightingales built and sang all day as in a thicket, undisturbed by busy gardener or prying boys, being allowed to feed with impunity on the few cherries and plums that grew on the neglected trees and the unpruned branches breaking from the garden walls—stood a fountain, crowned by a white marble figure of Italian workmanship, generally supposed to be Diana. It represented a Grecian maiden, with downcast head and modest eyes bent on the ground, almost naked but for a thin, fluttering drapery, which she seemed to have snatched up hastily from the ground at the first alarm of some distant voice, or the sight of some daring intruder.

The village curate said it was Diana alarmed by Actæon; but the rector, who was thought a much more learned man in the parish, because he never preached a sermon without quoting St. Chrysostom, to prove the divine origin of tithes, declared it was meant for Niobe lamenting the death of her children. Fed by an adjacent spring, the fountain had never ceased to flow during the family's births and deaths, prosperity and misfortune, and still threw its column of volatile silver far into the air, showering its broken crystal over the figure of the goddess, and shrouding it in a thick veil of pearly drops, that the rector fancifully said resembled the tears of the weeping mother; his imagination, never very conspicuous in his sermons, which were of the driest school of theology, being in this case, perhaps, stimulated by his desire to prove his argument.

The curate, on the other hand, with a quiet smile of triumph, used on such occasions to declare that no person of parts or skilled in the



humanities could deny that the water not unaptly represented the drippings of the river Alpheus, as the goddess rose hastily from its stream. The knight, when appealed to on such occasions, used generally to say that, "Zounds! it looked to him more like a milk-maid who had upset her pail, and was going home dripping to get a change."

Yet, without entering into the discussion, Mabel would then playfully interfere, and holding all three by the hand, would make them watch the "Fairies' Arch," as she called the silver jetting, as it bloomed into a rainbow in the sunlight, or fell with a musical babble into the mossy cracked cup of marble below, from whence it wandered away, in a little well-worn channel, to freshen the surrounding turf and feed the neglected flowers.

"Methinks a pretty emblem of Christian charity," said the rector on one such occasion; "doing good by stealth, nourishing the roots of upsprung blossoms, and wandering away ere they can delight it by their grateful perfume,

or shade it from the thirsty sun with their playful shadow."

"Drat it," said the knight, "don't talk so like a playbook; leave that for wenches in love. Zounds, if I can compare it to anything but my cask of canary, that is always filling, yet always emptying. It is like a woman's tongue—there's a simile for you, master rector—always babbling, never still."

"Yet always like music in the ear," chimed in Mabel.

"Yes, indeed, when it isn't scolding, or lecturing, or preaching, or begging for money or new satin gowns or silk fallals—eh, Mabel? I have you there."

"Was my brave mother's tongue such a wicked tongue as that?" said Mabel, looking down, after stealing a reproving glance at her boisterous father's jolly face.

"Hang it, girl, don't—now, don't mention her! She, you know, was perfect; but there are no such women now—are there, master rector? Adad, no! now they must paint,

wear muffs, and ride in the ring, and such fallallery. There are no such women now, Mabel. But there, don't pout; thou'rt a good girl, and shalt ride Black Jack to-morrow, and go a-hunting just as thy mother used; and thou shalt see a buck killed too, that thou shalt; and though I'm but a poor gentleman, and forgotten by the King—God bless him!—thou shalt sport a blue feather with the best. So cheer up, girl, and don't be angry with the old trooper, though he is rough; for he loves thee to his heart—don't he, master rector? And thee shalt have a husband—an honest fellow, come of good Tory stock, who can follow hounds; none of your scented fops, with wigs and snuff-boxes, who don't know a barb from a Galloway sorrel, and never breasted hunter in their lives."

"Will Mr. Troutbeck, father, be in the field to-day?"

"Don't mention the name, wench," said the father, with a furious look. "The Trout-

becks and the Darcys are sworn foes—Whigs and Tories, cat and dog, baker and devil ; as my father used to say, our very blood wouldn't mix in a basin. Didn't the old Whig laugh when Roger told him that I was going to cut down ten more elms in the avenue? — and the next day, in the hunting-field, didn't he sneer (d—— him!) and ask me if I could sell him some good elm-wood to make gates for his five new farms? And he a Whig too," said the old Cavalier, "and an exclusionist, and a whining, psalm-singing, snuffling rogue in the old times—one that, by God's grace, would, I believe, have cut off the blessed martyr's head with his own hands."

"And how did you answer him, father?" said Mabel, with a smile at her father's vehemence.

"Answer him, wench? Why, I told him I had forgot how much coffin plank was a foot since the day after Wigan Lane, when I had to bury some of his canting brothers; and then I rode off, whistling


'Now let him be confounded,
And so be every Roundhead.'

" 'A soft answer turneth away wrath,' " said the rector. " Marry, though, the knave was well answered, with his proud flouting ; and some might even have repaid him with a buffet."

" Egad," said the old soldier, " when I rode by the side of Prince Rupert through Birmingham, we pistoled a dozen of them for daring only to call out 'Down with the robbers !' but then they were armed, and had swords. No ! I would not strike even a Puritan if he had no sword on ; besides, there has been blood enough shed in that quarrel."

Sir Robert Darcy was an old impoverished country gentleman, so long removed from court, and even the camp, that he had now become in manners little better than a farmer. In education he had never been much superior to one. He was an excellent swordsman, but a bungler in logic ; a sure shot, but a bad grammarian ; a bold rider across country, but ig-

norant of any book but the Duke of Newcastle's pedantic work on horsemanship. He would have ridden forty miles before breakfast to see a game-cock of a particular breed, but not one to have converse with Dryden. Neglected by the court in whose cause he had mortgaged acre after acre, he knew nothing of court politics beyond what the weekly papers told him of the Popish Plot, which he thought an imposture ; and occasional scandals about Madam Carwell and Mrs. Nell Gwynne, about whom he was very tolerant. His time was spent in hunting, hawking, and cock-fighting, interspersed with visits to the assize town ; where he delighted to beard the Whig gentry, quarrel about precedence, tell old tales of Goring and Lunsford, and discuss a bowl of sack with old Tories like himself. His daughter's education he had entrusted to Mr. Richard Wilson, a poor, expelled, non-conformist clergyman of ultra-Calvinistic principles, whom he had learned to tolerate from love to the memory of his wife, who had




turned heterodox during her last illness, and had engaged the persecuted man for her private chaplain.

Mr. Richard Wilson was one of those men whom persecution educates from time to time to preach toleration to the cruel world. His family had been dowered by just nature with two gifts—virtue and misfortune. His father had been shot as a spy while praying with a dying soldier of the Ironside regiment, and he himself had lived a life of concealment and disguise; yet, in spite of all this, his mind had remained unhardened. What might have made other men cynics made him a gentle lover of mankind, pure as an apostle, but too humble and shy to become a reformer or a public preacher. He had learnt to suffer for his faith, but not to extend its doctrines; nay, his gentle spirit had almost learnt to dread even too zealous proselytism, as a first step to persecution. Of the vices of the court he knew little. Shut up among his books, and absorbed in religious abstractions, which to him were the only sub-

jects worthy of study in life, he had grown into a pale, thin, shy student, whose only wish was that his sect might be tolerated, and that Popery might be rendered harmless.

To Mabel, whom he taught as a daughter, he had confided all the polite learning of which he was master, including the Italian hand, a little French, the use of the globes, and an outline of the legendary history of those days. Taught to consider Latin necessary for a gentlewoman—for Lady Jane Grey was Mr. Wilson's type of the Protestant gentlewoman—he had enabled her to read Virgil with ease, and was now busily engaged in trying to make his less steady but affectionate pupil master of the Greek alphabet; Greek being, as he told her, in his stiff and old-fashioned phrase, "a speech very rich in fit epithets, and as it were the foster-nurse of all succeeding languages of the European family."

"So the old play says, dear Mr. Wilson," Mabel would say, disregarding the slight



shudder with which her instructor heard the source of her quotation :

‘The ancient Hebrew, clad with mystérie;
The learned Greek, rich in fit epithet,’—

Do you hear?—

‘Blest in the lovely marriage of pure words;
The Chaldee wise, the Arabian physical;
The Roman eloquent, the Tuscan grave;
The braving Spanish, and the smoothed-tongued
French.’

“Very apt, very apt, dear child of mine,” said the minister; “for the Roman doth always sound to me, peaceful as I am, resonant like a blast of the *lituus*, as Horace calls it—but we have not got so far as that, or the battle-trumpet—useful chiefly for orators and princes (while God permits such men to dominate); while the Greek is fit for lovers, or warriors, or statesmen, or citizens, or any one, being alternately soft as the breath of Zephyrus, and stormy and loud as Aquilo or Boreas—*Arbiter Adriæ*. Do you remember dear Horace’s words, *Quo non arbiter?*—”

But Mabel, whose mind had been much wandering from her book during this harangue, suddenly clapped her hands, and flinging down the Greek Grammar, ran to the window, dancing like a child with delight. "Oh, Master Wilson, look here!" she cried; "here's Roger currying Black Jack; and I'm to ride him to-day to the hunt. I shall lead the field, papa says, and ride like a beggar on horseback. Put on the fringed housing," said she, "good Roger. Clean the heavy silver hunting-whip," she cried, opening the lattice, and calling out of window to the delighted servant, an old soldier, with a long white scar down one side of his face. Roger looked up delighted, and pulled off his felt hat.

"Alas!" cried the pale student, sighing over his books. "Behold, said the preacher, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun; one event happeneth to all."

"And why, dear sir, these unhappy

texts? Is not your religion happy like mine? Does not the same Being say, there is a time to laugh, as well as a time to weep?"

"But, my child, he putteth 'to weep' first; and even the Pagan writer learnt to say, *We begin life with sorrow*. Yes! Well indeed did the Thracian, as Nicomedes tells us, weep when a child was born, to think of what he should suffer, and laugh when he died, to think of the sorrows he had escaped. But it is natural for thy years to assert that the Vulgate only says: '*Man* is born to sorrow, as the sparks fly upwards.' God forgive me for such flippant animadversion on Scripture."

The laughing girl, sobered in a moment by the serious look of her instructor, now turned again with a half-sigh to her Greek alphabet, covering the letters one by one with her tiny finger, as if committing their names to memory; while the tutor, bending with closed eyes, as if absorbed in inward meditation, repeated half-aloud the dicta and prophecies of his stern creed:

“Then I looked, and lo, a lamb stood on the Mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father’s name written in their foreheads;” and he repeated again in a low chant, “Having his Father’s name written on their foreheads.” Then a low murmur, as of a prayer, and these words became audible: “And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie, but they which are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life—but they which are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. Yes!” cried he, starting up as from a sort of trance, his hollow eyes turning in their sockets, his thin hands clasped and raised in adoration towards heaven, his whole frame quivering as if shaken by a spirit, “before the earth arose, or light was born, the number was written in the volume of the Book; before the voice was heard in Patmos, or the great cry of ‘How long, O Lord, how long?’ resounded in the


golden courts, and over the crystal sea ; before the pale horse had trodden Paradise into graves, or death and hell had blasted the smiling world ; yea ! and it shall be found there, when the stars have fallen like ripe fruit from the wind-shaken tree, and the bloodstained Ahabs of the world have crept into the caves, and the heaven is rolled up like a scroll, the sea turned to blood, and the last trumpet broken, and the globe, like a cup of glass—”

“ My dear Mr. Wilson, what means this ? My father will hear you—”

“ Be not frightened, maid ! for I am moved to speak of these mysteries, and the vision of last night stirs in my blood like a fever.”

“ My dear Mr. Wilson,” said Mabel, clinging to his arm, and gently forcing him into his seat, where he sat for a moment exhausted, shading his eyes with his hand, and wiping the moist drops from his pale forehead, “ I have long seen you troubled,

but dared not speak, lest my father should mayhap anger you with some rude story about those dreadful times of bygone trouble. I observed you pale and haggard when you came down to breakfast, you did not smile when my father filled up your cup, and made his usual joke of Sir John Barleycorn being able to throw the best wrestlers in England; and on Tuesday—yes, Tuesday—when we walked out together to cull simples in the Home Wood, you picked a Ragged Robin and called it ‘Bedstraw.’ Now, dear Mr. Wilson, do tell me what’s the matter with you. Tell your own child Mabel;” and she fondled and kissed his hand with all the tenderness of a child. “What has happened? My father loves you, and never thinks of your admiration for Titus Oates; he’s forgotten all that. Has Roger dared to taunt you? He shall go in a moment—yea, that he shall—though he did save my father’s life at Naseby. What of that? Would not any brave man save another’s life?”




"Nay, dear Mistress Mabel," said the minister, calmly as before, "it was but a vertigo, a cephalic weakness—nay, go not for the cordial-water; it would but heat the blood."

"I can think of but one thing. Roger told me that the stage coach dropped a letter for you last week at the lodge gate; and that when you saw it you turned pale, and muttered between your teeth 'God give me strength' three times."

"I had a vision last night," said Mr. Wilson, answering without replying to the question. "It was in the dark night—the middle of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men—I lay awake and prayed, as the moonlight, which had been for hours moving across the room like the shadow upon a dial, at that moment fell athwart my couch, and shone upon my face. I could hear the great clock ticking above me in the turret; the owls had long ceased hooting, and the dogs had fallen asleep, weary of howling.

The pale blue light fell, I say, upon the wall and upon the floor, and seemed now to me the same light I had once seen when a child—the day before my father's death—when I awoke at midnight, and felt a cold hand upon my forehead. Suddenly the light seemed to grow into a spot of brightness; I was aware of a presence; fear, as the Uzzite says, came upon me, and trembling, and made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face, and the hair of my flesh stood up. It stood still; but I could not discern the form thereof. An image was before my eyes, shadowy and vague; and I heard a voice. Then I shut my eyes, and prayed; and when I looked again, I saw my father just as I beheld him after death—calm, pale, almost smiling, a bloody rag about his forehead, his hand pressing the death-wound in his side. I leaped from my bed, and would have embraced him, but he waved me back, and pointed thrice in a particular direction. Then



I hid my face and prayed for strength ; and when I looked up again the moonlight had faded, the wind had risen, the rain lashed in fitful drifts against the window glass, and I fell asleep commending myself to God."

"And whither pointed the apparition?" said Mabel.

"That I may not now tell thee. But let us resume our studies. The storm is gone. It is as the preacher says so beautifully : 'Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone ; the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle-dove is heard in the land.' Do you remember, dear child of mine, how Flaccus tersely describes such a change? which, although he speaketh of the physical macrocosm, does not unaptly resemble the vicissitudes of our microcosm :


*'Solvitur acris hiems grata vice veris et Favoni,
Trahuntque siccas machinæ carinas ;'*

referring here, as the commentators tell us, to

the launching of the galleys and frigates at the approach of spring. Then, again, with equal truth—

*‘Ac neque jam stabulis gaudet pecus, aut arator igni ;
Nec prata canis albicant pruinis.’*

Yet how inferior is the Roman to the Jew, inasmuch as the former does not see the moral beauty of nature in its typical and profoundly prophetic aspect ! For are not day and night emblems of joy and sorrow ?—winter and spring of life and death ? Does not spring ever arise like a beautiful soul, as St. Jerome hath it, from the icy grave of winter ? Are not the flowers God’s love, written in strange ciphers, differently interpreted by each ? Are not the winds and storms types of sin and evil ? That swallow yonder, just flown beneath the eaves, is an emblem of the soul’s migration. Is not the sunlight full of the present, and moonlight of the past ? Then look you, again, at the voices of the year. The robin carols sad and lonely in autumn, like a lament for youth, which is spring, and man-



hood, which is summer. So the nightingale embodies the deep but unsatisfying joy of summer, and the cuckoo the hope and promise of May, repeating and babbling over it as children chant the names of those they love. Oh, why does spring change into summer, then just as we learn to love it fade into autumn, and lastly sink into the old age and death of winter, whose corpse is strewn but with dead leaves and frozen flowers? Why, doth not the scripture answer us all this in a breath, and say: 'Man is but a pilgrim and a sojourner; few and evil are his days. Man groweth up, and is cut down; he is like the morning cloud, and like the early dew; we pass by, and lo, we are not.'"

"Oh, dear sir, why did you not become a poet or a preacher?"

"When I was yet in the bonds of iniquity, and was still at college, I did—I did hanker, my child, after the flesh-pots of Egypt; but when I grew a Christian man, I put away the things of the reprobate child."

"These words of thine are but to divert me from my question," cried Mabel; "for though I know little of the world, I know I have not yet plucked out the heart of thy mystery, as the playwright says. But here is my father : let us to our studies."

As Mabel hurried to her book, the tramp of heavy jack-boots could be heard along the corridor, accompanied by the jingle of spurs, the occasional crack of a hunting-whip, and the whimper of a gang of puppies, whom the owner seemed attempting to keep in order, while he shouted out a Tory song with such accompaniment as the following :—

" ' He that is clear
A Cavalier '

(Come, t'heel, Towler !)

' Will never sure repine,
Although so low '

(Come, to heel, I say.)

[Howl of the dog, as if belaboured to the music.]

' His substance grow
That he may not drink wine.'

(Rat ye! Who-o-o-op, Dewlap; down pup, down.)”

Several doors were opened and shut, with curses; then the voice broke out again with the old Cavalier song :—

“It was a black cloak,
With truth be the joke,
That killed many thousands, yet never much spoke:
With hatchet and rope
The gallows old Scope
Did join with the devil to pull down the Pope.
He set all the sects of the city to work,
And rather than fail would have shared with the Turk.
Then let us endeavour to pull the cloak down
That cramped all the kingdom and crippled the crown.”

“The morning to ye, Master Wilson; and, in the name of the brave king Charles, where were ye, Mabel? for I’ve been all through the house—in the still-room, and the blue chamber, and the tapestried chamber, and the queen’s room, and heaven knows where; it’s dull work ferreting a warren with a hundred holes when there’s only one rabbit. Why, girl, I’m in such spirits I could run a deer down on foot, if it wasn’t for a twinge of

rheumatism in the hip—a remembrance of cold caught by night-bivouacking. Lord ! I haven't felt in such spirits since Edgehill morning. Roger remembers it : we've been talking over it. Roger, are the hounds ready ?" said the old cavalier, shouting out of the window into the court, where the sound of hoofs, neighing, and the clatter of pails, indicated much bustle.

"In a trice, your honour," shouted a lusty voice.

"That bright morning, I say—don't waste your time over those dusty books, Mabel—when the Show troop, as some of them called us, and I at their head, prayed to lead the charge with the Life Guards at Edgehill, and all the orange scarves waved before us like a field of marigolds—I had only time to bend to the mane of my horse and say—egad, I could think of nothing but grace, for it was just dinner-time—'For what we're going to receive, the Lord make us truly thankful.' Jacob Astley laughed at me, and said, 'Darcy, repeat

after me a soldier's prayer : " O Lord, Thou knowest how busy we must be this day : if we forget Thee, do not Thou forget us." Five or six of us repeated that ; for we knew ' No brave man need be afraid of hell,' as the adage goes. ' 'Tis good to begin well,' is one good proverb ; and ' He can want nothing who has God for his friend,' says another. The enemy lay before us in waves, thick as corn in a field. There were Denzil Holles's men, flaming in red—that was the reserve ; Lord Brooke's, in purple ; and Ballard's, in grey ; and Mandeville's, in blue ; and Stapleton's lobsters, as we called them—they were so difficult to crack—that shone in steel like so many looking-glasses ; and we had some of Newcastle's ' lambs,' white as the foam on our horses' breasts ; and Rupert's men, like gravedigger's, as they were, in black. Then his majesty rode down our restless ranks, the star shining on his breast ; and Rupert, his scarlet cloak glittering as if it was on fire, swept after him ; then the trumpet rang out,


'God and King Charles !' and we drove through them with a burst and a crash, like a hawk through a cloud of larks, or like a whale through a shoal of herrings." Unable to restrain the wild flow of his spirits, the old soldier broke out,

" ' Marching along, fifty score strong,
Brave-hearted gentlemen, singing one song.' "

" Well, but, father," said Mabel, wishing at least to divert the conversation, if she could not stop it—for it was at Edgehill that her tutor's father was shot—" tell me that story I am so fond of, of the siege of Bristol, where brave Colonel Lunsford was shot by your side on the steps."

" At the Frome Gate, my wench—the steps at the Frome Gate," said Sir Robert, delighted to launch into the full tide of his old recollections. " You remember the old ballad :—

' There came a post from Banbury,
Riding in a blue rocket,
And told how bloody Lunsford fell,
With a child's arm in his pocket.'



Well, we were with the Cornish men, and were played upon by musketeers from windows, so near that we were literally scolding one another—ay, that were we; ‘robbers’ and ‘crop-heads’ flew about as quick and stinging as the bullets. Well, we had two or three brisk bouts, and were just putting a petard to the city gate, when they saluted us with iron slugs and pike-shot, and ten of our van fell, and Lunsford among them. Sir Nicholas Stanning was groaning, for a case-shot had broken his thigh; and Colonel Bellasis was by me bleeding in the forehead. I myself had a shot on the bar of my headpiece: you may see the mark still, for it hangs in the hall.” (Mabel had seen it a thousand times, and heard the story as many, but she listened with smiling interest. A tale of such danger had always a charm, especially when of danger endured by one so beloved.) “Lunsford, when I went up to him, was shot through the brain, and past all surgeons; but seeing Stanning groaning, I went up to him,

pouring out a flask of Canary that I had about me into a steel cap that lay near, and held it to his lips. 'White coat,' he said to me—he thought I was a friend—'white coat, it tastes of blood!' But, before I could answer, Rupert came spurring by, and ordered me to head the attack on the Windmill Fort, and I dashed off. 'Come rack, come rope,' said the prince, 'we'll turn out these vermin before dusk.' I took it with a wet thumb, and was about to lead a party of the Gravediggers to wade over the quay into the city, when they sent out a drum to desire a parley, so I sent back a trump; and, egad, if before night we weren't carousing in the governor's own house, and at day-breaking were marching on to storm Berkeley. Well, who rode with me through Gloucestershire but Will Scroop, a young scapegrace, whom his blessed majesty had just before reconciled to his father, who was as proud as Lucifer and haughty as the devil. He was the same who said at Edgehill, 'I am now going down the

hill, my son, to serve the king; and if I be killed, you, my son, will have enough to spend.' 'And if I be killed,' said the witty rogue, 'you'll have enough to pay.' Egad, the boy, though, died. They were mad times, my lass, mad times; so it's.

'Farewell, my Lord Wharton, with hey,
And farewell, my Lord Wharton, with ho,
The sawpit did hide him,
And spade did unhide him,
With my trolly, lolly, ho!'"

"And were either of the brave gentlemen killed?"

"Old Sir Gervase was found stripped, lying among a heap of sixty dead men of Lincoln—pikemen—and with sixteen wounds in his front—always the front; no true Cavalier got shot in the back. And why?—because he never showed it. We left that for the Rumpers. Sixteen wounds had he, and all got in defending the standard; but the frost had stanch'd the old man's Plantagenet blood."

"One would think by your talking, father,

that blood improved, like wine, with age."

"So it does, girl, if a man doesn't turn it sour with Whiggery. Well, the brave lad, his son, found him out; warmed him by a fire of broken muskets; poured some wine, which is as good as life-blood—poor old man!—if it be anything like our claret—down his throat; carried him to a warm lodging, and the next day, in the king's coach, to Oxford. Those were the times, when with Tories it was

'Boot, saddle, to horse and away!
Saddle the roan and the flea-bitten gray;
Boot, saddle, to horse, and away!'

But you seem glum, Master Wilson, as if you hadn't heard these old campaigning stories of mine before; and Mabel here hearkens with as much relish as a Whig listens to treason. Have you seen to-day's *Gazette*? Egad, I thought as long as Tony (Shaftesbury) lived, and those murdering Londoners, no true Tory would ever get in the saddle again; but here, I see, the Duke of York was busy last week in Scotland, trying his new sort of boots on

the Covenanters. 'Once a knave, ever a knave,' is a good proverb; and, 'If clods won't do, try stones.' "

"Blood-drinking Rabshakehs!" cried Mr. Wilson, suddenly starting from his seat with a vehemence that astonished the old knight, who always upheld him for the only worthy Roundhead he had ever known, his heavy folio as he rose falling, and nearly crushing one of the puppies, who had been playing with Sir Robert's whip-lash. "Blood-drinking sons of Belial, there shall come a day when James of York and such as he shall drink of the wine of God's wrath; for in Jehova's hand there is a cup, and the wine of that cup is red!"


"My dear sir," said Mabel, "be composed. My dear father, his head has been much disordered; his pulse is feverish, his mind a little wanders. Let me lead you to your room, Mr. Wilson."

"Ah, do," said Sir Robert, kindly, "for he talks rather at random. And, harkee—tell William the butler to mix him a glass of

strong waters, and bid the cook make him a posset for night. 'A stitch in time saves nine,' 'Better a penny to the doctor than sixpence to the sexton.' And, Wilson, read some of 'D'Urfey's Pills to purge Melancholy,' forget Ahab and Rabshakeh, and I wager a jacobus to a bad halfpenny you're well before the day's run out. But what's this?" he said, stooping to the floor, and picking up a paper the puppy was tearing with his teeth. "A leaf from the—the—what?—the Prophecies of Muggleton! What—Muggleton the mad tailor! And this?—'A pious justification of the Parliament's conduct in the late war.' Is this, Mr. Wilson, what you teach my daughter?"

"No, no, father—indeed he does not: he never speaks of anything but Virgil and Horace."

"Who's Virgil, wench? Not Virgil that wrote on farriery?—it can't be he. You don't mean that Virgil who held Stamford against us for six weeks, and made his men poison their bullets, d—— him! Now, look



you here, Master Wilson ; I respect you as a good sort of man—you've taken much trouble with this sweeting here ; but, drat it ! may I never stride horse again if I don't turn you out neck and heels if I find you talking any more nonsense to her about your Rabshakehs and Ahabs. Leave that for Sundays and Church-of-England men, who have got a right to the Bible—no thanks to Oliver."

" I cannot hold my tongue," said Mr. Wilson, whose usual fear and respect for his patron seemed melting rapidly in the force of a fanatical fervour, which increased in the very attempt to repress it, " when the Lord bids me speak. No—not, Sir Robert, even for thy bit and sup, can I hold my tongue. ' I will bless the Lord at all times ; His praise shall be continually in my mouth.' I have put my hand to the plough, and have looked back ; I have been lukewarm in the true cause, and shall, if I amend not, be spit out like those of Laodicea ; for I have been neither cold nor hot."

“‘Eaten bread is soon forgotten,’” said Sir Robert, with an angry snort, bursting into a quotation from one of the few books he ever read—

‘Still so fervent and opposite,
As if they worshipped God for spite;
The selfsame thing they will abhor
One way, and long another for.’”

“Am I to honour God or man most?”

“Oh! none of your cant with me. So ho, Towler! But I warn you, Mr. Richard Wilson, if you teach your cursed rubbish to my daughter, my doors shall be shut upon you. No, no, Mabel—don’t talk to me. I’ll have no canting fellows here, to make the maids hang themselves because they think they are not elect, or my butler cut my throat and steal the family plate on the strength of his predestination. We’re old friends, Mr. Wilson; but take care—for, egad, the Darcys keep their word.”

And so saying, Sir Robert, whose string of cavalier recollections had revived all the partisan fury of his younger days, his Toryism

having been somewhat fanned by the remembrance of its being the anniversary of Edgehill, strode out of the room, clacking his whip and followed by his train of puppies, who yelped, howled, and barked, as they chased each other down the long corridor. Mr. Wilson, according to his usual custom, came to wish the hunting-party farewell at the hall-door.

“I tell you what it is, Mabel—and give me a kiss, my beauty—they’re a bad lot; and, as the proverb goes, ‘What’s in the bone won’t out of the flesh.’ I’m sorry I said anything about the meat and the drink, though—for, drat it, if he was Old Nick himself, he was welcome to that—but my blood was up; and it does gall me to hear a man quote Scripture as if it belonged to him and no one else. But he’s a worthy, gentle-hearted man—tender as a woman; and I hardly know what I could do without him. Well, there, you know what it says in *Hudibras*. Talk of wit!

'He could raise scruples dark and nice,
And after solve 'em in a trice,
As if divinity had caught
The itch on purpose to be scratched.' "

This was, however, said in a low voice, so as not to be overheard by Mr. Wilson, who, having apparently relapsed into his former fit of abstraction, was wandering slowly after the pair, with his finger keeping a place in a ponderous book which he brought with him, either unconsciously or from pure affection.

Sir Robert, gay in a rich embroidered suit, had already mounted his old chestnut charger, and was administering playful and paternal flips to the incorrigible puppies, who seemed to do nothing but roll on their back, and run about with the stumbling sprawl peculiar to the youth of such animals. Mabel was jaunty enough on the back of Black Jack, her delight, examining her whip, looking at her bridle, and patting her horse's neck with all the grace of the fullest beauty of maidenhood. But we must describe Mabel, and not leave the reader to invest her with false attributes.

She was now about nineteen, and the toast of half the county, though she seldom appeared in public but during assize time, once a year, at the county ball. Her cheek wore a flush of sunny crimson ; her complexion was of that mellow brown which you see on a newly-expanded hazel-leaf. Her eyes were of a deep summer-blue, of the hue of a June twilight, contrasting richly with the deep lustrous ruby of her full lips and the snowiness of her bosom, which the dress of that day left rather more exposed than in the severer costume of modern ladies. Her blood, too, had a pretty habit of rising in beautiful flushes of "rosy red," as Spencer calls it, in moments of enthusiasm, as when she heard a thrilling story of bygone patriotism from her father, or some recital of stern martyrdom from her gentler tutor. She was dressed in a tight-fitting horseman's coat of fine purple cloth, the broad golden buttons of which left it open below the waist ; its flapped pockets spreading over a skirt of a deeper colour, which fell

in broad folds below her feet. A bright yellow breast-knot fastening her jerkin at the throat, left two broad pendent ends to flutter up against her eyes, or cling to her cheek. As she coquettishly cast them behind her to flutter around her, waving in the wind, her father, gorgeous and erect, in black velvet and silver lace, eyed his daughter with pride and fondness; and her old charger fretted wantonly and proudly with its little burden, as she adjusted her fringed gloves and her French riding-whip.

“Where’s old Roger?” said Sir Robert impatiently to the rough-haired red stable-boy who held the horses.

“I’m a-coming, Sir Robert,” said Roger cheerily, as he appeared, according to immemorial custom, bearing a huge silver race-cup upon an embossed salver; “and a blessed day of remembrance it is, Sir Robert, to think what a different hunt we were leading this day twenty-two years. Well, my—if Miss

Mabel isn't as beautiful to-day as a rose on a May morning!"

"None of your flattery, Roger, or you'll turn the minx's head. She is pretty enough, as times go; but you should have seen your old missus when she danced the Canary with me at the king's mask. But we shall be late. Here's to the memory of the blessed martyr," he said, raising the cup to his lips, while Roger took off his hat with the deep veneration of a trooper of the old school. Mabel took a sip; and Sir Robert handed it to Mr. Wilson, and bade him drink to the blessed memory.

Mr. Wilson, without replying a word, replaced the cup on the salver, put both down on the door-step of the hall, and re-entered the house.

"The man's moonstricken," said Sir Robert, shrugging his shoulders. "He used to laugh when I spoke thus; but now, a—— of him, he turns as black as Hugh Peters: soon

he'll be forbidding the name of the king to be mentioned in my own house."


"If you please, your honour, I think it was this day twenty-two years ago that a party of our Gravediggers shot his father, I've heard say so; but in my humble opinion, if he would preach up treason, they did quite right."

"If he preaches rebellion here, out he goes," said Sir Robert. "I'll make every jade and fool in the house sign an oath of allegiance to the king to-morrow."

"He can't abide the king, Sir Robert; I seed him turn up his nose when you said something about the health of the king martyr."

"Turn up his nose, adad; I'll cure him of that. But never mind now, Mabel; it's an hour's trot to the 'Three Oaks.' To horse! Roger, and shout, Roger,

'For liberty and privilege,
Religion and the king,
We fought; but O, the golden wedge,
That was the very thing.'



Now then, Roger, strike in, and let the old psalm-singer hear it :


‘ There lies the cream of the cause,
Religion is a Whig ;
Pure privilege eats up the laws,
And cries for king—a fig ! ’ ”

Then, to the loud blast of the French horn, which Sir Robert wore strung round him, and which sent the rooks in a black cloud out of the elms, to the loud cracking of whips, and the joyful yelp of some half-dozen stag-hounds, the whole party swept down the avenue.

CHAPTER II.

THE STAG AT BAY.

It was scarcely more than eight o'clock, and the dew still lay gray upon the grass, over which they cantered, laughing and singing, beneath the tall trees, some of which were already destined for the axe. The wind had arisen, and seemed chasing the shadows before them, the quick slant sunbeams coursed over their path, swift and silent as if scared by the sound of the horses' hoofs. The birds hushing their song as they approached, flew with startled notes down the hedges. The rabbits leaped away amid the furze; and the hare limped off over the long bare fallow.



After a time, turning to the right from the avenue, they entered a long sandy lane, shut in with hedges; and from thence, on to a high upland of downs, on to the edge of the covert, which was their destination. Before them lay a broad country, of dark plough-lands, green meadows, and wheat stubble. The horizon stretched far away, like a broad purple sea, amid which the white farms lay like white-sailed barks, the spires cutting the sky-line like the tapering masts of some huge craft, the hull of which escaped the eye.

The morning was fresh and bright, the wind piped merrily amid the tangled rigging of the dwarf oaks that edged the covert within which lay the wild stag, whose doom was already decided. Overhead the white piles of clouds floated like ships under a press of sail through a melting sea of blue, which turned here and there to amber, as if washing the roots of some golden island as yet out of sight.

Many were the greetings that met the ears

of the party. "Good morning, Sir Robert; and how's the rheumatism?" "Pretty Mistress Mabel, all the pleasures of summer attend you." Or it was, "Sir Robert Darcy, I greet you well; and, Miss Mabel, may the summer's sun smile on you." Or, "Brave Sir Robert, well met on this glorious anniversary." Then Sir Robert flung out his hands to them all, and sang, and shouted, and quoted proverbs, and talked of Edgehill; while Mabel looked at her glove-buttons, and played with her whip, and smiled, and darted arch looks, won half a dozen hearts, and sent home old gouty justices—those at least who were bachelors—to drink her health, after the third bottle, from a jack-boot, and with other fantastic feats of gallantry now very justly passed into oblivion. Now as the party, every moment gathering in number, the riders not merely in scarlet,—for they were chiefly old officers,—but in all descriptions of gay colours, cantered up, along lanes and past farms, slowly following

the huntsman as he moved forward to the second cover, it was an exhilarating sight to see the children run out, and comely maidens in straw hats that threw flickering latticed shadows over their pretty sunburnt faces, hurry to open the gates, with a "God save ye, gentlemen, and send you good sport!" and none without a special greeting for Mabel, who would stop behind a moment with all sorts of kind inquiries after bedridden grandmothers and crippled fathers, and then gallop on to join her impatient father, or some old cavalier-gallant with a long black patch saddling his nose, from whose long-winded compliments she had broken, perhaps, somewhat abruptly. But though none felt more keenly than Mabel the charm of the sportsman's expectation, she had been dowered also with a sense of pleasures more subtle though less palpable.

That summer morn her imagination, though she never wrote a verse in her life, and certainly had as yet not read many (for such beings as English poets had no part to play in

Mr. Wilson's gloomy cosmogony), was filled with sounds and senses that hurried in mingled sweetness through her mind, leaving no image, but merely a vibration as of music but just suspended, or that perfume as of Paradise that surrounds us when we wake slowly from a dream of unattainable happiness.

She heard the larks singing in clusters as they stormed heaven's gate, tried to outrun the returning sunbeam, or to nestle in that low white cloud that, all brightness itself, overshadowed their nests; she saw them, drunk with the madness of song, fall back from the sun they could not reach with all their ceaseless strivings. She marked with no straining effort—for her love of nature was a beautiful uneducated instinct—vast striding shadows passing over the young wheat as if they were spirits wandering round the world; every sound of the wind was full to her of unformed words and music, hinting at sweeter harmony than was ever heard on earth; and she laughed if the butterfly hovered round her cheek, as if he

took it for some rare flower. Then, with a pretty pettishness, she would beat her glove with her whip, and say, "Forsooth, this stag is very slow in rousing;" and the next minute, remembering a scrap of the Horace lesson of the morning, would hum it to the old French air of "La Vendange."

"I don't like your cursed French words," said a horse-dealer, who was heaping a lover's praises on a certain "bit of a mare," and almost persuading Sir Robert into a purchase; "I don't like the people, or none of their lingo."

"Give us 'My father was born before me;' that's the tune, Mabel," said Sir Robert; "don't buzz in that way, like a bee in a bottle, but out with it; for, zounds! there's no one here with half so pretty a pipe."

"Fie, father!—what, before all the field? And besides, 'My father was born before me' is a jig; and I only know minuet tunes."

"I think, by the plenitude of this solar light," said an old brother soldier riding up

at this moment, and shaking Sir Robert ferociously by the hand, "as we used to say at court; I never saw this little lady of thine look so charming."

Mabel, who had, of course unconsciously, just turned her head to watch a lark rising, now suddenly flirted round, and greeted the old friend with girlish warmth; for in those days cold prudery was not thought a necessary voucher for maidenly purity.

"Ah, ah! Tom — none of thy old court compliments, or you'll turn her giddy head. 'Tis a pretty thing enough, too," he said, fondly chucking his daughter under the chin, just as if she was a foal he was buying; "and these roses don't lose their colour in a shower like our court madam's."

"Stars and planets!" whispered a young bystander to the horse-dealer; "the Whigs of Oxfordshire can show nothing like that."

"Kick me!" said the horse-dealer, rather disgusted with Sir Robert, who had broken

off on hearing the filly was by the Troutbeck runner out of Rapid Jack ; “you should see Miss Lucy Bellsizes ! Why, she’ll drive her father’s coach-and-six full gallop round Crompton Park.”

“Well, but I thought—”

“Oh, there was something unpleasant about young Churchill.”


But we leave their conversation, to return to stout Sir Robert, who, affable, a good boon companion, a brave old soldier, a sound Tory, and above all, what was of more consequence in such a company, a superb rider, whom no fatigue—even now in his sixtieth year—could weary, and no fence daunt, was already surrounded by a dozen friends. Never before was seen such pulling at gloves, shaking of hands, and touching of whips, mingled with such curses at straggling dogs and jibbing horses.

“Quite a stranger, Sir Robert ; and your fair daughter here, I vow, a complete vestal. Is Crow’s Nest turned into a nunnery?”

said a stiff-throated gentleman in spectacles rather leaning to the Whig persuasion, and no very cordial friend, in consequence, of Sir Robert, whom, however, he respected as of gentle blood and an old stock—almost as old as his own—for proud men do not like a prouder race. “We saw nothing of you at the race-ball; and there was lady Wildfire running everywhere to find this charming young lady. Fie! Are you growing precise, eh, Sir Robert, eh?”

“Reasons, Mr. Wildfire, reasons. Mabel was not unwilling,” he chuckled, “to go, you may bet a jacobus. Egad, when you find a Darcy quarrel with mince-pies and plum-porridge, and rail at custard, hang him for a d—d Trimmer; we are none of those fellows who won’t sit down to eat a stolen goose, but will nevertheless trot off snuffing a psalm on a stolen mare, as *Tribulation Barebottle* does in the play. Do you remember what Rabelais says?”

“Now don’t quote that naughty book,



there's a good papa," said Mabel, laying her hand gently on his.

"That's where it is ; this daughter of mine won't let me have my own way ; she rules me like the Associations did the seven counties. Is that old knave Troutbeck here to-day ? " he said, abruptly turning with a frown upon his honest face to the stiff-necked friend, who had dismounted to tighten his saddle. "What ? I can't hear what you say with your head under that flap."

"Mr. Troutbeck, I hear, has gone with sixty of his tenantry, armed back and breast, to meet the Earl of Shaftesbury, who is coming at the head of four thousand men of the London Protestant club to attend Charles Stuart at the Oxford parliament, that opens to-morrow ; pray God we be preserved from Popery and bloodshed."

"And a pretty way to prevent it, to let old Tony bring up his clubmen, with their cursed blue ribbons and leather lungs, to shout down all good men who love God and the

Church of England. And harkee here, Mr. Wildfire ; you're of a good old family, and have suffered as I have for the right, but to prevent quarrelling, pray call the king the king, for the future, and not Charles Stuart."

"And may I also beg of you, Sir Robert Darcy," said the Trimmer, with a starched smile, "to denominate that true Protestant the Earl of Shaftesbury by his full cognomen of Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury?"

"What!" said Sir Robert Darcy, digging his spurs in his horse, and pulling him almost on his haunches, just to give vent to his indignation. "What! Anthony Ashley Cooper Earl of Shaftesbury and his gracious Majesty all in one breath! Out upon it, if I wouldn't lay him by the heels, and Oates too, and the whole of the crew! There, there, there, Mabel, never mind me. Egad, it sends the blood to my head, and fills me full of those old songs; for what does the old proverb say? 'He is a fool who cannot be angry.'"

And he broke out, much to Mr. Wildfire's indignation, with

‘ Farewell, Say and Seale, and hey,
Farewell, Say and Seale, and ho,
And those sons of Ayman
Shall hang as high as Haman,
With the old Anabaptists they came on,
With a hey trolly lolly ho.’

‘ He’s a fool who cannot be angry,’ he growled again.


“ But he’s a wise man who will not,” said a merry voice, as a horseman rode up and took Sir Robert’s hand ; “ and there’s a proverb clenched. In these times,” he said, whispering in his friend’s ear, “ we want plaisters, not blisters ; even a brave man should not wilfully offend his enemies. There’s a mutual friend here you little expect ; let me introduce you.”

But before Sir Robert could clap his merry-eyed but prudential friend upon the back, a clump of horsemen, rather more soberly dressed than the other gallants of the field, and some of whom had had their backs turned to Sir Robert, broke up as he approached,

and, to the utter astonishment of all, Mr. Troutbeck and his son appeared as the leaders of the troop.

But as these two nonconformist gentlemen are likely to play a somewhat important part in our story, we will interrupt the scene for a moment, even at this critical period, to describe the new actors who have just entered abruptly on the stage.

The elder of the two, who was clad in a sombre coat, unadorned by lace, except on the cuffs, was a morose-looking, sallow man, of about fifty, who, disliked by the world, had consoled his pride by turning round and hating mankind upon strict Calvinistic principles. His eyes were hard and cold, his features had no life or pliability, and his mouth was drawn down by habitual melancholy. In stature he was tall and thin, and he stooped slightly, as if from long sedentary habits. If report was true, Mr. Troutbeck was a dangerous man, an enemy of the Government, a member of many secret societies ; and his enemies said,



even of the notorious "Calves' Head Club"—a club that, among Tories of this age, had acquired as disgraceful a notoriety as the noted "Hell-Fire Club" did among quiet people of a century later. He was said also to be a correspondent of Shaftesbury, a leader of the disaffected of the county, an attendant at secret conventicles, and an applauder even of the bloody tenets of the Fifth-Monarchy men. To add to the incongruities of his character, although in his own country cold, reserved, and difficult of access, he was said to be a sociable visitor of the London coffee-houses, an occasional attendant at court, one who knew Algernon Sidney, and attended the meetings of the Royal Society. Sir Robert he looked upon as a decaying gentleman, hardly worth regard, but for the oldness of his family—a claim which his pride acknowledged, although with some reluctance.

But grey November and golden June are not more dissimilar than this unloving, plotting sire and his son, who rode beside him, not on

that pale horse that made the peasantry call his sire Father Death, but on a chestnut stallion, full of fire, and curveting in all the measured antics of the *manège*. He was a frank-looking, open-browed young man, of some five and twenty ; clear-eyed, and with a slightly sarcastic smile always playing round his mouth, which was yet firm and clamped at the corners, matching a full and prominent chin. He was rather pale, for the red had retreated a little to the centre of his cheek ; his crisp brown moustaches were twisted up from the lip. He wore no wig ; but his thick clustering hair fell in dark masses on to his shoulders, almost hiding the plain broad lace-folds of the snowy Steenkirk, that contrasted with the deep green of his velvet hunting-coat. His broad-brimmed hat was ribboned with green ; while his high boots, and heavy hunting-sword, with its silver hilt, hanging from a purple fringed sword-belt, gave him more the character of a cavalier than a young Whig huntsman.

As the gentlemen raised their hats, with a few short cold greetings and stiff salutes, a keen observer might have observed that Mabel slightly coloured, and grew suddenly anxious to disentangle a knot in Black Jack's mane ; while the young man's eyes turned towards her, and rested there, as if rather by magnetic instinct than will.

"I had heard you were gone to attend this meeting at Oxford," said Mr. Troutbeck to Sir Robert ; "for we coted by the way two gentlemen from the court, who asked us the nearest way to Crow's Nest ; but I heard them say, as they rode off, there was not much chance of your not being a Trimmer, for they heard that you kept a nonconformist chaplain, and had ceased going to the race-balls."

"And I just heard," said Sir Robert, much elated by the news, and cutting the air with his whip, at the bare thought of turning Trimmer, "that you had ridden to join Tony

and his 'prentices, to go and shout 'No Popery' with our good king's bastard."

"We shall ride a troop of sixty," said Troutbeck, drawing himself up to his full length; "and join the earl at the cross-road by Williton; boot and saddle after dinner, and a few Protestant toasts."

"'One fool makes many,' that's all I say," said Sir Robert; "and you may take it to snuff if you like,—you, or any man. If the old days of buff and Cavalier come again, if I won't melt down every spoon, ay, and my lady's silver fan here present; egad, I'll pawn my last acre, and cut down my last oak too, for the good old cause. And though I haven't three hundred men at my back, as I once had, before Whiggery ate into my land, I can still mount half a dozen; and half a dozen true men can make twenty Roundheads—don't take offence—turn tail; for blood and heart is not lost with fields and farms, no, nor bought with them; and your paltry

Grecian pillars, what are they to an old avenue that no man can buy?"

"I don't come here to quarrel," said Mr. Troutbeck, his lips whitening with rage; for a dozen Tory gentlemen were laughing round him, to hear what they called "Sir Robert's ballyragging the old mummy of a Whig;" "but my door can be found at any time by any friend of yours."

"A challenge, a challenge!" roared a dozen squires' voices. There was no knowing what might have happened, for the two parties were beginning to knot and pair, when a loud blast of a horn was heard; the next moment, half a mile distant, a stag of ten was seen for a moment crashing through a low bushy copse, and the next breaking out across the champaign country beyond, with a few of the foremost hounds hard at his heels. In an instant the disputants forgot their feud—forgot king, crown, covenant, and Whiggery—and galloped off like mounted demoniacs in the direction of the

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yelps, that came by starts upon the wind. Not the last among them was Sir Robert, restored in a moment to perfect serenity and happiness, leaving Mabel, if she could not reach his side—which she generally did—to follow, guarded by Roger, whose watchful eye never lost sight of her for a moment; although when he had heard Sir Robert at words with the “old Whig,” he had, it must be confessed, pushed into the ring to strike a blow again beside his old master if the need came.

Conspicuous in the flight was the horse-dealer, driving his steed at extravagant leaps in order to show its mettle and enhance its price, although with great probability of breaking its neck before he achieved a sale. “The pace is too fast for music,” old Roger said, when he saw Mabel’s cheek glow with excitement as she cleared a hedge like a swallow, and joined him in the charge. Behind them old Troutbeck and a few of the staidier men could be

seen following at a leisurely pace, rather like spectators than abettors of the sport. Above all sounded Sir Robert's horn, cheering on the dogs, and urging them to the attack with all the energy of the old soldier.

Young Troutbeck rode moodily beside his father, his laced cocked-hat drawn over his eyes, appearing, from frequent whispers, to be restrained from joining in the chase; ignorant that fate destined him, however unexpectedly, an important share in this day's achievement. The stag, now cut off from escape in the direction of the Troutbeck woods, "took to soil," as hunters call it, in a small stream which wound amid the sloping meadows some six miles distant. The Troutbeck party, striking across the country, to be in, if possible, at the death without fatiguing their horses by the chase—for they had other work on hand—were among the first who arrived at the water, where the stag of force, with sweeping antlers, of ten times

at least, was standing at bay, eyeing the furious and baffled dogs that lined the river-bank.

In an instant the Troutbecks, and a few stragglers who had now joined them, leapt from their horses, many of them, especially one fat justice, at the great risk of never mounting again; for getting off a horse, if you are at all of the Falstaff build, is something like abdication, a difficult thing to retract.

"Make in at him," cried half a dozen voices; but no one seemed inclined to be either drowned or gored.

"I care not a straw for a stag on dry land," said the horse-dealer, who had come to display his horse, not his courage; "but I can't abide them cattle on *terra infirmer*."

"What's this, what's this—a camp-meeting?" said Sir Robert, with a sneer, as he burst into the ring, having been delayed by a stirrup-leather breaking, and saw their check-


mated position. "Swim in, prick him out with your sword, and never mind the old woman's saying,

'If thou be hurt with horn of hart, it brings thee to thy bier ;
But barber's hand will boar's hurt heal, therefore thou need'st not fear.'

A man who has got four inches of fat on his brisket can't be hurt very much by a prog with a buck's horn. Here goes, man!" and Sir Robert was actually tugging at his immense jack-boots in order to wade into the stream with less impediment to free action, when the deer, with a furious splash, scramble, and bound, leapt upon the bank, escaped a dozen blows of hunting-swords made at it, gored one dog, trampled another, and galloped off not a hair the worse, dripping as it went, and tossing its broad antlers as if in scornful delight at its triumph.


This time young Troutbeck was something more than a spectator. Stung by Sir Robert's taunts, which Mabel had heard—for she had

by this time joined the baffled party—and vexed by a fall which he received from his foot slipping on the moist clay of the bank just as he slashed at the fierce and dangerous prey, he had even been foolish enough to be offended at the horse-dealer, who had laughed and whispered to a friend, as if implying that the fall was well-timed. But the horse-dealer, being of a cold temper, and essentially prudent, stammered out a hasty apology, and slunk off for fear of any further quarrel. In a moment the young horseman's brain was fired with the thought of a disgrace with which he now imagined himself, in the fumes of his pride, to be for ever tainted. In a moment, with his untired horse, he had distanced Sir Robert, and was close upon the heels of the stag, and some distance before the huntsman. Three dogs, staunch and swift, had already "set him up" at the foot of a withered fir that, barked and bleached, stood like a skeleton at the entrance of a glassy glade. Troutbeck tried at first to gallop in roundly, but



was afraid of hurting the hounds that were trying to get at his throat. A noble spectacle of courage under adversity was that royal stag, his dark dun hair steaming, his eye glaring, his foot spurning the turf, as he stood beneath that withered tree, with his face firm set against a world of foes, hope cut off, yet still heart-whole and undaunted, while round him, like so many creditors round a debtor in sanctuary, barked the hounds. One tawny-muzzled dog, of more than usual courage, lay with its nose between its paws waiting for an opportunity; the rest yelped, howled, and raved, while keeping at a prudent distance from the sweep of those terrible antlers, already tipped here and there with crimson.

In a moment the deer broke through the dogs, and making at Troutbeck, tore his horse's side close to his thigh. This escape made the hunter more wary, desperate as he was; for he heard the hunt rapidly approaching, with Sir Robert at their head, fretting at



being outridden by a "whining young Whig." Firm and of ready apprehension, the young huntsman leapt from his wounded horse, tied him by the bridle to a neighbouring tree; then cheering the dogs to a rush, so as for a moment to draw the deer from the pine-trunk that protected him, he leapt in and hamstringed the buck with a single sweep of his heavy hunting-sword, then leaping on his back cut his throat with a second blow from a hand as sure as it was quick.

When the first riders came up, and Sir Robert had sounded the mort, or death-signal, they found Troutbeck bestriding the fallen deer that still quivered with life. His hat had fallen off, and his hair blew over his eyes. One hand held the red hunting-knife, while the other, dripping with blood, held the antlers in its firm grasp. The Whig party were loud in exultation at the bravery of their young hero; the Tories loud in depreciation of his rashness at the hazard. Some shouted applause and waved their hats; others whipped

off the hounds and shrugged their shoulders. Sir Robert only wound his horn to summon stragglers, and said nothing.

"Wasn't it bravely done?" said Mabel, putting her hand on his shoulder, as her father drew somewhat back from the exulting crowd, that pressed to shake hands and congratulate the young huntsman, who was examining his horse's side with great anxiety.

"Pretty well for a Whig," said Sir Robert testily, turning away his head; "but, 'zooks, the thing's done every day.

' We're not the only person durst
Attempt this province, or the first.'


Don't go shouting in that way, Roger, as if you'd the falling-sickness. Haven't you seen me do this very thing a score of times; besides, didn't Swapem tell us the young psalm-singer slipped down just now at the brook to escape goring. 'All's well that ends well,' is true enough; but 'Well begun, is half done,' is truer still. I say the lad's no mettle, and hasn't ridden to-day as a gentleman should;

slinking about like a schoolboy at his old father's back, who's as black-hearted an old Puritan as ever sat on the bench."

"You lie!" said a low stern voice behind them. It was Troutbeck himself. "It is not for this slander alone that I demand satisfaction," said Mr. Troutbeck, leaping from his horse, and calmly drawing his sword, "but for a growing Tory insolence, that I see nothing but bloodletting can cure."

"It shall never be said that a Darcy was slow at that game," said Sir Robert, giving his horse to Roger, and bidding him ride home with Mabel, who neither screamed nor swooned, but clung to her father's arm, and in a low voice poured passionate entreaties into his ears.

"There, there, girl! Now, for God's sake don't disgrace me. I know you would be an orphan; but still I cannot let my name be stained for twenty times worse than that; and there's your uncle at Paris, though he's an old man. Mr. Troutbeck, I'm at your dis-



posal. We need scarcely measure swords; we're too old for such fencing-school tricks. The sun is in neither's favour, and we're both in boots—a plague on 'em. Room, gentlemen, room!"

By this time the whole hunt were around them, wrangling, encouraging. "There's always been bad blood between them, and there was with their fathers before them," said one. "A cold-blooded upstart," said the Tories; "a proud old ribald," said the Whigs.

"*I* claim the privilege of meeting Sir Robert Darcy," said young Troutbeck, putting his hand on the shining blade of his father's sword; "the insult was to me."

"I have already told Sir Robert," said his father sternly, "that I draw my sword to avenge twenty years of foul-mouthed insolence, and not the mere petulance of a baffled huntsman."

"D'ye hear that?" said Sir Robert, beating the ground with his foot. "Adzooks, and

haven't I been outwitted of my land, gentlemen, acre after acre, by this old plotting fox—my patrimony torn from me by crafty deeds?"

"Lead the lady away, my son," said Mr. Troutbeck. "This is no sight for woman's eyes; and we may not both go hence alive. There shall be at least one enemy of liberty less on the earth to-night, if God nerve this arm."

"Don't let him touch her," said Sir Robert furiously. "A Roundhead shall never come near a daughter of mine. Roger, take home my daughter. Mabel, God's blessing on thee!"

Before she could reply, the duel had begun. Mr. Troutbeck, contrary to expectation, fought impetuously; and Sir Robert coolly, contemptuously parrying, with careless ease, a succession of furious and hasty lunges, scarcely seeming to be willing to risk an attack on a thinner and more active man till he was in some degree wearied out.

The audience grew red-faced with shouting



applause as Whig or Tory effected a thrust or parry of unusual dexterity. On a sudden Sir Robert assumed the aggressive, put in three swift thrusts, and then, receiving a slight flesh wound in driving off his enemy's sword, passed his blade through the fleshy part of his adversary's shoulder, who, staggering back, stumbled against a molehill, and fell heavily to the ground, amidst roars of approval from Sir Robert's Tory friends.

"My old trick, my old trick," said Sir Robert. "I knew I should have him. A Whig is never prepared for a new move; and that last stoccado of his was weakly put in." As the crowd of friends were gathering round the fallen man to see if he was able to renew the combat, a richly-dressed horseman came up puffing and blowing, his arms working, and his whole bearing full of full-blown bustle and importance; while a thin, sallow, ferret-faced man rode on a small pony close at his side, with a blue bag swollen with papers dangling like panniers on either side.

"Quite against the law, gentlemen," said the country justice; for such was the new arrival.

"3rd Elizabeth, cap. 36," whispered the clerk.

"3rd and 4th Elizabeth, cap. 56, is against you, gentlemen," said the justice courageously; "and I must beg you to disperse. Sir Robert, I am astonished to see a gentleman of your years. Mr. Troutbeck, a person of your gravity—you surprise me. Do not compel me, do not accelerate me, sirs, into reading the Riot Act."


"3rd and 4th James I."

"Eh, what? O yes, 3rd and 4th James I, I am informed—"

"And 2nd Car. I."

"And 2nd Car. I. prohibit all riotous assemblies, and make all such gatherings treasonable. Don't drive me, gentlemen, to sign a mittimus."

"There's no occasion for statute-law," said Mr. Troutbeck, as the crowd opened and



showed him pale and with his arm bound up ;
“ nor any other exertion of arbitrary and
tyrannical power. I cannot lift my sword
again to-day ; but there’ll come a time—
there’ll come a time.” And so saying, he
rose, assisted by his son, mounted his horse,
and rode slowly in the direction of Troutbeck.

“ One less for old Tony’s procession,” said
Sir Robert, bursting into *Hudibras* :—

“ ‘ Alas, what perils do environ
The man that meddles with cold iron.’ ”

But he drew it on himself, and was never a
good neighbour. I’m sorry, though, that I
decried the young fellow’s stroke ; for ’twas
well done : but never mind. Now, Roger,
join in the chorus :—

‘ A hound and a hawk no longer
Shall be tokens of disaffection ;
A cock-fight shall cease
To be breach of the peace,
And a horse-race an insurrection.’ ”

“ Allow me to congratulate you, Sir Robert,”
cried a horseman, advancing from the crowd,
“ on your success over the old Whig, as I

hear he is. I have seen something of sword-play, but never saw a thrust in tierce better put in. I am the bearer of a message from his grace the Duke of York; I and my companion here, Colonel Claverhouse, having sought you at Crow's Nest, found you were out hunting, and came on hither. I am Mr. Churchill, of the Second Life Guards. Allow me to introduce to you Colonel Claverhouse, just arrived from putting down disturbances in Scotland; he is dying to be acquainted with so well known and gallant an officer as Sir Robert Darcy."

CHAPTER III.

THE TWO AMBASSADORS.

"COLONEL CLAVERHOUSE," said his companion, bowing coldly, and keeping his stern unmoving eye fixed on Sir Robert, "is proud of meeting one who has bled for that good cause which seems now again endangered."

"Adzooks, gentlemen both," said Sir Robert, flinging abroad both his hands at once, "no court *congés* with an old trooper, who can only beg you to come and take a poor Cavalier's refreshment at his broken-down house of Crow's Nest. Egad, though, I wish Mabel was here. Did you meet a lady and a groom, gentlemen, as you skirted Ravenhill woods?"

"We did, indeed," said Churchill, kissing his hand to an imaginary goddess ; "beautiful as Diana, and queenly as Hippolyta. My friend here, who has a poetical vein, Sir Robert—"

"I a poetical vein !" scowled Claverhouse, but did not speak.

"Swore," said Churchill, quite undaunted, "that the flowers sprang up from the foot-prints of her horse, while the sunbeams seemed to run before her like heralds of her coming."

"Pretty court language, but thrown away on a poor squire's daughter, gentlemen. Your news from his Grace."

Breaking abruptly into this conversation, Claverhouse, in a few soldier-like words, informed Sir Robert that his Grace the Duke of York being alarmed, not for his own sake, but for his Majesty's, at the rebellious procession of the Green Ribbon and other Protestant clubs, headed by Shaftesbury and the heads of the Whig party, had made an effort to muster all the Tory gentlemen of Oxford-

shire who were of approved loyalty and stanch adherents to Church and king; and who were begged to attend the opening of the parliament with as many blue-coat men and tenants as they could muster, armed back and breast, and carrying pistols in their holsters. "The lands of Crow's Nest we find, by an old return of the troubles, furnish sixty horse?"

"They did," said Sir Robert with a sigh. "But now, thanks to that Whig scoundrel I have just pinked, my own body-servants are all I can mount."

"You're steel of the true temper after all, I see," said Claverhouse, with a cold smile. "But to be frank with you, Sir Robert, I expected a far different response; for I heard you were but little better than a Trimmer, and even kept a Puritan chaplain."

"So I do," said Sir Robert, with a wince; "it's more from charity, though, than choice. But, egad, I keep him down, and make him drink loyal—at least—that is—he's a good sort of man."

“Try him with the oath of allegiance,” said Claverhouse ; “that is the best touchstone in these times ; and then twist—”

“My friend Claverhouse,” said Churchill, laughing, “is exceedingly anxious to introduce several new systems of torture into England ; he is determined, if the boots do not become soon popular with English judges, to join Kirk at Tangiers, and devote the rest of his life to exterminating the Moors.”

“Churchill, you know the limits of my patience ; so keep your wit for La Belle Hamilton or the blushing Bagot. If my feeling of duty seems to you cruel or ascetic, that is between me and my God. I have, at least, not devoted my life to the study of dress-wigs, Martial’s gloves, *ragouts*, or *chatelains* ; it is on the fidelity of such gentlemen as Sir Robert Darcy the *de jure* succession may depend.”

“Now, don’t be angry, Claverhouse,” said Churchill. “I yield to no one in a sense of a soldier’s duty ; but we may surely sometimes stand at ease. You’re always seeing

great political consequences in Bab May's treading on the tail of the king's spaniel, or in Chaffinché's combing his flaxen wig."

"And you," said Claverhouse, "must have earthquakes or volcanoes, sieges or battle, or you think the world standing still."


But as during this short conversation, which was carried on in a low hot whisper, Sir Robert was attentively observing the two messengers of the court, we may as well briefly give the result of his observation.

Churchill, the younger of the two, may perhaps be better known to our readers under his more celebrated name of Marlborough. His features were bold, his eye keen, and his presence commanding; yet report deemed him at this time a mere voluptuary of the court, remarkable even now for parsimony, and tarnished by several acts of meanness. He was dressed in the height of fashion, and wore his cocked hat pinned up with a large crimson rosette. His companion, a few years

later immortalized as Dundee, was of a pale complexion ; his features were of great beauty and delicacy ; his mouth small but firm ; his face almost Grecian in the perfection of its oval. He wore no scented wig like his companion, but his own dark brown hair fell flowing to his shoulder ; a short musketoon hung at his saddle-bow, and his saddle was high-peaked, and of the military fashion. His eyes, the worst part of his face, were cold and melancholy, and his mouth was sad and sarcastic. A keener observer than Sir Robert might have shuddered to see a man who, in the stern asceticism of his ambition, would go through the world pitiless and cruel, though he had to wade in blood up to the lips.

“ Beautiful excrescence of earth, intended by nature to pay debts ! ” said Churchill, looking up at the trees of the avenue through which they were now riding.

“ Ah, ah—very well, sir, very well ! ” said Sir Robert, giving him a tremendous thump



on the back, that set him coughing, and drove the powder in a cloud out of his wig.

“Killigrew is witty,” said Claverhouse, with a sneer, “though he does play the buffoon; but yet the buffoon is as good, I think, as the fop.”

“You’re too bitter,” said Churchill, in a whisper; “but, egad, that old gentleman’s clap on the back was my best punishment for stealing the joke.”

“An excellent good spot for defence, if the Whigs ever rise,” said Claverhouse, his eye kindling as he rose in his stirrups, and pointed to the old hall in the distance between the trees. “A double ravelin there, with a traverse or high breastwork;—a redoubt would stand well on that knoll where the three beech-trees are, though the pass would be shallow—”

“A true young soldier,” said Sir Robert, eyeing him from top to toe with admiration. “Crow’s Nest had the honour, sir, of being for six months an outpost of the Oxford gar-

rison. Yes! in that time we repulsed no less than five attacks of Haselrig's men with only forty Babe-eaters and ten musketeers of Moyle's brigade. Once they fired the barn with a grenade, and another time put a petard to the kitchen door, and blew it in: but we soon rallied, and played upon them from the upper windows with pistols, and with culverins from the top of the clock-tower roof, for Meldrum had sworn to bring me into London alive or dead. But it's always the same — one Cavalier to three Roundheads. 'He who fears death lives not;' as Hudibras says—

'Their words

Were sharp and trenchant, not their swords.'

So when they sent in the trumpet, they found me sitting on a powder-cask in the hall, and holding a black flag that we had carried off in a sortie; a broken drum near me was full of white cockades for night attacks, and a smoking musket was leaning against my barrel. 'Base slubberdegallion,' I said, 'go back to thy

masters, and tell them that we'll stew all our buff coats for soup before we surrender.' And, egad, it was all a trick ; for that night they broke up, and this house you see here was never taken after all."

"We shall never hear the last of this," whispered Churchill, who had been for some time betraying marks of uncontrollable *ennui*, fingering guitar tunes on his scabbard, humming French airs, and otherwise diverting himself.

"A brave man's story can only be dull to the thoughtless," said Claverhouse between his teeth, as they rode into the courtyard.

"No apologies, gentlemen—no apologies ; I see you whispering together. The chine of beef's ready, and the claret is longing to see the daylight. An old soldier cannot allow two young troopers to boot and saddle without spilling some sack or a little burnt wine. 'No pottage is good without bacon,' the proverb says ; and I say, a fig for a meal without wine. And here's my daughter, come

to bless God her father's got off scot-free; she will add her wishes to mine to detain you; unless times are altered, young soldiers do not often refuse requests from such pretty mouths."

Of the gallant compliments paid to Mabel; of her modest pleasure at the homage of the gay Churchill and the cold Claverhouse, heightened by her joy at her father's escape, which she had long ago known, for she left Roger to watch the result; and of the old knight's campaigning stories — we will say nothing. Suffice it, that after a hasty collation the two gentlemen mounted their horses, with the understanding that Sir Robert and his four men would be ready, armed, at the park gate at ten o'clock of the morrow, prepared to fall into the king's train as he passed on his way to Oxford.

"Gallant gentlemen both," said Sir Robert, as they rode off. "That proud lad is the riper man; yet the gayer fellow is no worse soldier. But it will be a busy evening with

me, girl; for I must look up my best back-and-breast piece, with the Damascene gorget I wore at Edgehill; and Roger must brush up the crimson housings with the gold-lace fringe; for I must turn out as a Tory gentleman and one of an old family should do, to guard his king from a pack of noisy rebels, who would set up another Commonwealth if Shaftesbury were only another Cromwell."


With these words the old knight hurried off to execute a series of multifarious duties; namely, to see his dogs fed, his hawks ditto, his armour cleaned, his pistols furbished, and his saddle-cloth brushed; not forgetting, however, amid all his occupations, to inquire for Master Wilson, who had not attended as usual to say grace when dinner was served up in the hall; luckily, perhaps, for him, as the toasts were chiefly "Down with Tony," and "A strong rope instead of a green ribbon."

Mabel's first impulse on returning home was to inquire for her tutor. The old house-keeper, Mrs. Rachel, supposed he was up poring

over those everlasting books. Pretty Betty tossed her head, and said he was moping, she supposed, as usual, up in his room in the clock-tower. Roger was sent to call him. No one answered. Mabel grew anxious, and tripped up in search of the indefatigable student. *Tremor cordis* was upon her, she did not know why. She felt a strange vague apprehension, all the more terrible from its causelessness. A sense of approaching evil hung over her. She stood still a moment at the foot of the worn brick steps leading up to the often-visited room ; she could hear many sounds—the swallows chattering under the eaves, the great iron pulsation of the clock above, the distant noises in the court, her father's voice whistling and cheering his hawks, and even the muffled throbbing of her own heart. The sunset-light fell red and soft upon the whitewashed wall, still dented here and there by the marks of Puritan bullets. She listened. There was no sound—not even the leaf of a book turning, a pen scratching, or

a foot shuffling on the matted floor. Should she call her father?—there might have been murder.

Half ashamed of her fears, and remembering that she was a soldier's daughter, Mabel ran upstairs. The door was ajar; should she push it open? It creaked bodingly; the wind moaned sadly and desolately through the keyhole. She entered; the room was empty. The light cane-backed chair stood at the same place, with the crutch-headed cane leaning against it; the old quarto Horace still lay open at the ode the two had read that morning; some dried wild flowers lay on a shelf; rows of folios basked on the floor, leaning against each other for support, some marked for reference. Mabel could not help looking behind the arras, as it waved, apparently without wind, to see if any one were concealed behind its tawny screen. She opened a small bureau; it was empty. Mabel was about to leave the room, to inform her father of Mr. Wilson's strange disappearance, when



a volume of Calvin that lay on the table arrested her attention, for a strip of paper projected from between the covers. She drew it out. It contained only these words, evidently the last farewell of the fugitive :—

“MY DEAR CHILD AND BELOVED PUPIL—Bernardus Viscontinus doth say that Hypericon, or St. John’s-wort, gathered on Friday in the hour of Jupiter, when it comes to its effectual operation—that is to say, about the first full moon in July—suspended or borne about, or hung at the neck, mightily helps digestion, cheers the heart, nourishes the brain, and drives off all fantastical spirits. Wear it, then. Farewell on earth.”

When Sir Robert heard of the flight, he ordered Roger to saddle Black Jack, and make inquiries for twenty miles round. Roger insisted on searching the ponds, because, he said, “Master Wilson was melancholious.” The housekeeper always thought it would come to that ; for he had lately refused her succory pottage, and taken to

extreme fastings. Betty had always said he was a witch, and she was sure of it; for she had seen, three days running, a black mouse run round his room while she was sweeping it, and he bade her not harm the little creature. And hadn't she seen at Daventry the Rev. Mr. ——— drive a devil out of a young man with the falling sickness, who afterwards confessed he had five familiars visit him in the shape of dun chickens?

Sir Robert was up next morning before cock-crow; the busy rooks were only just awaking one by one, and croaking drowsily here and there, high up in the mist of a summer morning. The hawks whistled from their perches when they heard his voice; shook their wings and fluttered; the dogs rattled in and out of their kennels, and the horses neighed greetingly from the stables; while the red-haired stable-boy had to be squeezed into a tight buff jacket, made for Sir Robert when he was at Westminster School; the gardener

had to hide his spindle-shanks in enormous jack-boots, with broad flaps of stirrup-leather.

It wanted about an hour of the time of meeting, and terrible was the amount of work still to be done. Roger could only find two odd spurs; the gardener's stirrup-leather had broken; and Sir Robert had lost one of his Edgehill pistols. At this crisis, as Mabel was tying on her father's crimson scarf, as well as his fuming, singing, and perpetual motion would allow her, a horn was heard sounding three times at the extreme end of the avenue. Gradually the sound came nearer; the next moment a gay carriage-and-six, with outriders, and running footmen carrying the usual silver sticks of office, drove rapidly up to the gate.

"It's his Majesty, by St. Peter!" said Sir Robert, observing the royal arms on the panels, and hastened to the hall door to receive his illustrious visitor. Can that be the king that steps out, shakes his wig into

order, looks at himself in a small pocket glass, then bows three times till his wig touches the doorsteps ; while the servants laugh and chatter, and the coachman bends from his box to hear what he says? The new visitor, king or no king, takes no notice of Sir Robert, but anxiously superintends the unpacking of several small valises and chests, crying out various directions in a shrill important voice.

“ Antoine, ser, prenez garde, canaille ! Zat sauce sall be ruined if zu zall disteeerb heem. Jacques—James—fripon, break zat flagon, and it vill bring you to the échafaud—vat you Anglais call gibbet.”

“ Zooks, what’s all this? Do you take my house for an inn?” said Sir Robert.

“ Sare,” said the Frenchman, putting on a conical cap of white linen, shrugging his shoulders, and thrusting down his hands deep in his pockets, “ I am Monsieur Ortolan, cuisinier français, zat is, French cook to his majesté ; and I am come to prepare a small

collation for his majesté, who will be here tout de suite. (Vieux bête Anglais!)"

"There, there, he says something more. Run for Mabel, Roger; it's something about the king and his relation."

"Don't be flustered, your worship," said one of the running footmen, leaning complacently on his stick, and whispering to Sir Robert with a side-glance at Monsieur Ortolan, who was unpacking a case of silver stewpans, polished like mirrors, and of a dozen different sizes; "it's only the way of them furriners. His Majesty is going to luncheon here on his road to Oxford—that's all."

The hall was already strewed with chafing-dishes, bags of charcoal, cases of essences, stewpans, trussed fowls, and various long-necked bottles of propitious appearance. In five minutes Monsieur Ortolan was attired in a white dress, and, with his case of spoons and knives by his side, was absorbed in the manufacture of various fricassees of delicious odour, timing everything with a stop-watch, taking

snuff with an air of great nonchalance, and occasionally looking at the smoky walls and ceiling with an insolent shrug of affected pity.

"Lor' a mussy on his messes!" said the cook, indignant at being expelled from her own dominions; "if he only knew how to cook a good honest joint!"

"If I can cook ze cotelette, if I can cook ze soupe Néapolitaine,—mon Dieu, if I could make ze dying man eat! Antoine, apportez-moi ze poivre. Le vieux soldat, qu'il est en colère! Pah! ah, ah, coquin, ah! I will teach him to respect his majesté's officer de cuisine."

"What does the wizened old fellow say, Mabel?" said Sir Robert, looking at him with mingled curiosity and wonder. "I see his jaw going like an ape's with the ague."

"Plait-il, mademoiselle, que vous êtes charmante. Qu'est-ce qu'il dit, ce vieux monsieur-là? Il est farouche comme tous les diables, n'est-ce pas?"

Acting as prudent interpreter between her

father and Monsieur Ortolan, Mabel soon discovered that he had been sent forward, according to the king's usual custom when his visits were sudden and unexpected, to save Sir Robert any annoyance to prepare a hot luncheon, in order that he might rest before his public entrance into Oxford, and await a strong escort of Life Guards, under Colonel Claverhouse, who was to join him at Crow's Nest; the attitude of the mob that swarmed the road being unusually threatening and alarming.

Mabel ran to put on her silver-lace gown, and begged her father to resume his black velvet coat and his—

"No, no, girl," said he; "proud as I am of receiving his Majesty this day under my roof, I will receive him as a soldier, and not as a courtier; egad, if I don't feel as gay as a hawk that's just whistled off the fist." And he began, much to Monsieur Ortolan's amusement, to shout, "The king shall enjoy his own again!"

"Only look at them messes, Sir Robert," whispered Roger; "they ain't fit for a dog to heat."

"They turns my stomach," said the house-keeper, who had been stalking about with upturned nose and folded arms.

"An Englishman would be ashamed of hisself," said Roger, "for spoiling good beef in that heathenish—I call it heathenish—way. Lord, Sir Robert, do you remember how we cooked that horse-steak on a ramrod after Edgehill; and how it was done to a turn?"

There is no knowing what series of campaigning stories this might have led to, had not at that moment a second horn been heard, and the next instant two coaches, attended by a few outriders, dashed up the avenue, and drew up at the door.

The door of a heavy gilded coach flew open, and with a hearty laugh the merry monarch stepped forth, depositing a long-eared spaniel upon the ground, giving it an affec-

tionate kick with his royal foot; he took off his hat, as Sir Robert sank upon one knee, and welcomed him to "an old Cavalier soldier; poor house of Crow's Nest." Who but knew the swarthy deep-lined face, full lip and mouth, heavy eyelids, dark upturned moustache, and black periwig of Charles, the worthless good-humoured *bon-vivant*? He was now dressed in deep-blue satin, looped back at the cuffs to show the full ruffles at his wrist. Round his neck was a cravat with long ends of the richest Flanders lace. He wore the blue ribbon of the Garter, and the George, set with diamonds, hung under his left arm. His stockings were of the finest pearl-coloured silk, and his shoe-buckles glittered with crystals. Behind him came Arlington, with the black patch saddling his nose that Killigrew so often laughed at, produced originally by a pistol wound received during the civil wars; his uncurled light wig falling on his shoulders; he was remarkable for a certain stiffness of manner that made him the butt of the gayer part of

the court. Then arm-in-arm walked the Earl of Rochester and Sidney Godolphin — the former not the licentious wit, but the son of the great Lord Clarendon — his handsome piquant features contrasted singularly with Godolphin's double chin, high broad forehead, and massive features, always bland and calm, and ever attuned to that courtly smile that had raised its master from a page to the Treasury bench. Cautious and calm, he offended no party; clear-headed and incorruptible, he was equally useful to all. "Sidney Godolphin," said Charles, "is never in the way nor out of the way." Prudent and cool, he detested factious men, and was a Conservative from very necessity of temperament; grave and reserved, he might have passed for a bishop, had it not been known that all his spare moments were spent in horse-racing and cock-fighting.

His friend Hyde, quick and penetrating, a fervent Tory and experienced statesman of the Cavalier school, might have made an

excellent prime-minister but for his arrogance and violence of temper. His consistency, however, in such a corrupt age had made even Hyde seem respectable.

Last of all, his head bent as if absorbed in meditation, came a man that, mentally, far transcended either the king or his two companions. This was Sunderland, the secretary of state, the wildest diplomatist of that abandoned age, when statesmen were without principle and women without virtue—cold-hearted, keen-eyed, restless, insatiable, hireling of France, a lukewarm republican in theory, a lukewarm royalist in action, he was a microscopic observer of character and life, but with a less comprehensive glance than Shaftesbury. He was a distinguished writer himself, cunning, supple, shameless, free from all prejudices, and destitute of all principle, courted and feared by all parties; in the royal closet potent, at the council-board taciturn, in the House of Lords a mute and sneering listener to the brilliant, philosophic Halifax and the

adroit and ready Shaftesbury. Fascinating, yet insincere, he was the fair-spoken Belial of his century's politics, and had an utter contempt for such visionaries as Algernon Sidney, whose purity seemed to him Quixotic.

But, leaving for a moment these statesmen, let us describe the hall into which Sir Robert ushered his guests, and on whose ponderous table, thanks to Monsieur Ortolan, a dainty luncheon was already smoking.

It was a lofty room, its ceiling covered with square panelling, with coats-of-arms painted at the intersections. The floor was paved, but covered here and there with mats, and, where the king sat in Sir Robert's state chair, with a small Turkey carpet. The walls were panelled with oak, and studded with stags' horns, foxes' brushes, and a few pikes and old matchlocks. At the end stood a perch, on which rested four hawks, two long and two short winged, adapted for the striking either heron or partridge ; and over the

vast fireplace hung a tapestry of fox-skins. In one corner of the room, on a heap of straw, was a litter of puppies ; in another stood a bunch of hunting poles. From the chimney-piece dangled a string of hawk's bells, and a long twisted whip ; while on a shelf above lay an old felt hat full of pheasants' eggs, and on the window ledge were a pack of old cards and a pipe, besides a book of Chronicles and a work on farriery. A low door at one end of the hall opened into the chapel, a spot now seldom used, but the pulpit of which served Sir Robert as a convenient cupboard in which to keep a cold chine of beef and a pasty for a "snack" between whiles.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HOT LUNCHEON.

SIR Robert would have served as cup-bearer, but the king insisted on his taking his usual seat at the table ; while he himself sat beside Mabel, who, with many blushes, had just been introduced to his Majesty.

“’Tis a good wench,” said Sir Robert, fondly pinching her arm ; “ a better daughter than her old father deserves ; and though she knows few of the modish airs, she can play ‘ Sellenger’s Round ’ indifferent well on the old spinet—ay, that she can.”

“ As beautiful and virtuous as her father is

honest and brave, I venture to swear," said Charles, with an admiring smile that won Sir Robert's heart.

In five minutes more Sir Robert was quite at ease, stirring round his wine with a sprig of rosemary.

"Is the day yet fixed for my brother Tony's coronation?" said Charles, breaking suddenly into the conversation that at the other end of the table was now swelling into a loud murmur. "Has Little Sincerity been measured for his crown, or will the old one he had made for Poland serve his turn?"

"I have not heard, your Majesty," said Godolphin; "but I met the old mole on the Oxford road to-day, at the head of the Green Ribbons, all lettered 'No slavery, no Popery,' and shouting, I'll wager a crown, as if they were going to fling down the walls of a new Jericho."

"And yet, odsfish, if Tony hasn't more divinity than all my bishops, and more law than all my lawyers. No one sees quicker into a heart than Cooper; yet he must needs

use the stirrups of religion to get up into the saddle of power. Killigrew says he is now devoting himself to prove that I am engaged with the Jesuits of St. Omer in a plan to cut my own throat."

"How well, your Majesty, old *Hudibras* sketches him!" said Sir Robert, pouring some syrup of gilly-flowers into his sack:—

'Mong these there was a politician,
With more heads than a beast in vision;
So politic as if one eye
Upon the other were a spy.'

"Have you heard of the last joke of the Tory wits at the 'Rose'?" said Godolphin.

"No, nor of their first either," said Charles;
"but what is it? Nothing more, I hope, of drubbing poor Dryden in Rose Alley, or reacting D'Urfey's terrible duel with Mr. Bell at Epsom, when they fought for one hour by the clock at the 'Well' as to whether a note in the last Gavotte was B flat or G sharp, and ending with one of the combatants receiving a cut on the lute-finger, giving him such exquisite torture that he fainted."

"Better than that, sire. To commemorate Shaftesbury's dropsy, they have dubbed him Count Tapski, a title adopted by him when he missed the Polish crown. His emblem with them is a tap, and they drink their wine out of a silver urn with a tap accordingly."

"May that urn be a type of his funeral urn being nearly ready," said Essex, bitterly.

"Nay, nay," said Charles, "I wish Tony no hurt. He is as agreeable a companion as ever helped one to kill an hour. I like Little Sincerity as well, aye, as many better subjects. Odsfish, it makes me laugh to hear James talk of Cooper's plots to cut me off at Hampton, or surprise me at Newmarket; then the next day to see Tony hobble in, with an air of eternal friendship on his brow, and a gentle smile on his mouth."

At this moment the conversation was interrupted by Fidelio, the king's pet spaniel, who, having been for a long time tugging at the

long lash of Sir Robert's whip that hung invitingly from the mantelpiece, had at last succeeded in pulling it down, together with an old copy of Fox's Martyrs, three tobacco pipes, and a hat full of pheasants' eggs; he had then snapped at Roger, and run between his royal master's legs, where he now barked, half frightened, half in defiance.

"He has done no hurt, your Majesty—only a few birds the less; the old book there I only use to keep my May-flies in; I'm getting too old to fish."

At this moment Roger, who, from behind his master's chair, had kept his eye during the whole of dinner fixedly on the king, suddenly broke out into a sort of crying laugh, and cried, "I beg your Majesty's pardon for the liberty, but your blessed face is so like your father's of immortal memory."

"I forgive you, Roger," said Charles, with a smile, pulling down his wig; "but I'm sorry to find you already tainted by court

flattery, for I'm universally known in London to be the ugliest dog in the three kingdoms—ay, and clap the colonies into the lot. But, Sir Robert, you seem uneasy ; do not let me disturb your daily habits. Do you go to bowls after dinner ?—or do you take the tobacco ? ”

“ If you please, your Majesty,” said Roger, “ and begging pardon for the liberty, as an old soldier, and one who won the colours at Edgehill ”—(Sir Robert was all this time making deprecatory signs, and frowning terribly)—“ but my master, for twenty years, whenever the pudding has been brought in, has been accustomed to sing, ‘ My part lies therein-a.’ ”

“ Well, your Majesty, it's no use denying it ; but in your presence. Lord ! I would not——”

“ Pish, Sir Robert ! Clap into it as you love your sovereign, and perhaps I will give you a song of my own writing afterwards, if Baptiste has brought my French lute. Now, man, no coughing and clearing of the

throat, but roundly to it, as if it was a view-halloo."

"Your Majesty, it's nothing but an old thing not worth the hearing."

"Now, don't be coy, Sir Robert; and mine's only a new thing not worth the hearing. Silence, gentlemen, for Sir Robert's song, and none of your critical carwitchets."

Thus encouraged, Sir Robert pushed back his plate and knife and fork, as if they were in the way of his voice; took the cover off his London pudding, which Roger had just brought in to give him inspiration; folded his hands on his sturdy chest, half shut his eyes, and then sang in a clear lusty voice the following trifle:—

" 'There is a pudding by the fire,
And my part lies therein-a;
The lads in the hall, go call them all,
And bring them all within-a.' "

Loud applause followed this quaint ditty, upon which Sir Robert bowed, turned red, drank off a full bumper of claret to hide his confusion, and then, as if able to eat better after

the observance of his usual habit, fell to on his pudding.

“Sir Robert, a slice of yours. It must be a good pudding that produced so good an air. Mine is but a poor lackadaisical thing. I wrote it in an old avenue of limes at Buda, where I used to walk and think of England, and wonder how I should pay for my next new clothes.”

“Oh! no more of that, an’t please your Majesty; for that raises the waters,” said the good old baronet, whose sympathies two bottles of claret had perhaps somewhat helped to elicit.

“Baptiste, the lute. *Merci*. Here’s the song. You all know it,” he said, turning to his courtiers, “as well as my Worcester stories; but you’ll pardon the fondness of a father.” Charles, then standing up, and putting one foot on the red cushion of his chair, sang to the accompaniment of a lute, which he played with considerable skill, the following song in a rather hoarse but yet powerful voice :—

“I pass all my hours in a shady old grove,
But I live not the day when I see not my love;
I survey every walk now my Phillis is gone,
And sigh when I think we were there all alone.
O then, 'tis O then that I think there's no spell
Like loving too well.

But each shade and each conscious bower that I find,
Where I once have been happy, and she has been kind;
I see the print left of her shape in the green,
And imagine the pleasure may yet come again.
O then 'tis I think that no joys are above
The pleasures of love.’

But, adzooks,” said Charles, as he finished his song, and threw his lute with a careless air to his attendant, “love is not what it used to be in our young days: then lovers broke their necks in the tiltyard to show their constancy.”

“And now they do it in fox-hunting,” said Godolphin. “Once they used to show the strength of their limbs, now they show the strength of their heads. They ride like mill horses round the Ring in the Park, till they get as dusty as a miller’s man, and then spend half the night in drinking Burgundy to wash the dust out of their throats.”

Ere Charles had time to reply, a thunder of horses' feet muffled by the turf, but ringing out louder at intervals on the gravel, was heard. It grew deeper and clearer, till the rattle of swords and scabbards against metal-bound saddles or jingling stirrups could be heard mingled with shouts of command; the next moment a troop of fifty Life Guards, headed by Claverhouse, dashed — the men red-faced and the horses covered with foam — into the courtyard.

"Egad," said Sir Robert, starting up and slapping his thigh with delight, "it does me good to see the willing hearts there are in the land to sweep away the Green Ribbons."

In a moment Claverhouse entered, and, addressing the king, assured him that the appearance of the mob that was then passing rendered it necessary for his Majesty to arm; at the stamp of his foot three pages entered, carrying a helmet and a breast and back piece.

Charles gave a groan at the sight of these, threw himself back in his chair, filled up his glass, and yawned ; then got up, stretching his arms and looking in the glass, while he stood bareheaded without his wig, and put on his helmet—a curious contrast to his other dress.

“Egad,” he cried, “I sometimes wish I could shut up Whitehall for the summer months, pawn my crown to old Metrolle the goldsmith at Temple Bar, ship my twenty-four fiddlers that D’Urfey made the song about, and sail off with Nelly to some snug little island out of the reach of the cry of ‘No Popery’ and the jingle of Bow bells, where Chaffinch should be my cook, and Bay May my groom.”

“Theatres, tennis-courts, and pall-malls are rare in desert islands, and the exchequer of such delectable places is generally too rather scanty,” said Godolphin, as he helped to buckle on his monarch’s sword. “A king would be very happy without subjects; but,

unfortunately, where there are no subjects there is no one to pay taxes."

"Well, thank God," said Charles, "Monmouth's away, dancing at country fairs for the sake of Protestantism somewhere in Somersetshire; and James and that blustering Lauderdale are busy hanging in Scotland. They are all better out of the way when London comes to Oxford."

"Killigrew was right," whispered Godolphin to Arlington, "when he said Charles could see if he would, and James would see if he could. There are the materials here for something better than a Whitehall *soirée*."

Ere Charles had done arming, Roger, who was also a skilful gardener, and proud of his skill, came in, and with a scrape of his leg and an awkward bow, begged his Majesty would allow him to put in the royal carriage a basket of pearmain and jennetings from Sir Robert's home-garden.

"Another day such as this," said Charles,

with a good-humoured laugh, as he threw himself back in his chair, stretched out his legs as if they were still cramped by the confinement of the coach, first looking at his shoe-buckles, then readjusting the blue ribbon of the Garter, and lastly, passing his fingers through the scented curls of his black wig, "and Tony will lose half his subjects. How many a fat alderman to-day from Portsoken or Bishopsgate has endured martyrdom on a hard-trotting horse! Odsfish, Arlington, how the portly city-feeders must have shuddered at the very thought of such a ride, and consoled themselves by the thought of all the bonfires of Smithfield and the 'blessed cause!'"

"Upon my life, your Majesty," said Hyde, "it's too bad, though, to saddle the Papists as they do. If a fellow is knocked down now at Hammersmith and loses his silver-hilted sword, the highway-man is always a concealed Papist; if a man reels into the gutter on his way home from his club, and a link-boy picks his pocket, it's a Papist; if I go into a tavern,

and won't pay my host's exorbitant bill, he mobs me with all the drawers, and dubs me 'Papist;' if I cane a bully in Spring Gardens for treading on my toes, he shouts 'Papist!' and I'm driven out and treated worse than a bailiff in Whitefriars."

"Egad," said Charles, laughing at Hyde's Tory indignation, "I take these things philosophically, and laugh at them in my sleeves; but, faith, the people are moonstruck, I think. There's Nell told me this morning that the very people round the theatre yesterday were crying 'Protestant pears,' and 'Hot Protestant pudding.'"

"Your Majesty is too good-natured with the *canaille*," said Hyde, fiercely. "This earl of theirs will be turning '81 into '41, and Aldersgate into Whitehall. We shall have yet to trample them under our horses' feet, and pull down that den of sedition where the old traitor sits, day and night, fanning the hot coals of rebellion."

"Why, you're another Rupert, Rochester,"

said Godolphin, with a good-humoured smile, helping himself as he spoke to a favourite dish near him, and then holding up his glass to the light with all the gusto of a connoisseur. "We shall have you soon heading the Life Guards in the battle of Moorfields."

"And the great siege of Thanet House," said Charles.

"Defeating the allied forces of Little Britain and Shoreditch," echoed Arlington, with his usual stiff deliberation.

"We shall have Buckingham introducing you as one of the kings of Brentford, with an army of three bandy-legged drummers and a knock-kneed pikeman."

"If your Majesty choose to turn everything into a jest, well! You chased a moth all the night when your fleet was burning, just as Nero fiddled when Rome was blazing."

"I know the taunt," said Charles; "I've read it twenty times in the Protestant newspapers. Go on: Finch is not here to indict you for treason."

"Your Majesty must pardon my natural vehemence."

"His Majesty is too accustomed to such vehemence to be the least disturbed. Besides, after court compliments, it is really quite stimulating. Go on. It's like hearing a trumpet sound a point of war after listening to Torcelli's lute, or the siren Davis a-trilling of French airs."

"It troubles me to see your Majesty bear so patiently the factious working of turbulent spirits—these knaves who under their Geneva gowns carry the assassin's knife and the headman's axe. Methinks, when I mount the peak of history, and look upon the past and future as on two oceans, I behold this glory of all islands, this mistress of four seas, a prey to the flames of civil war and the whirlwinds of rebellion."

"I see—why, you're all in the heroic vein to-day, Essex," said Charles, wearily; "but cannot you keep this eloquence for the council-chamber to-morrow, and not weary me and

Sir Robert, who will certainly think me a strange uncivil guest for thus shutting him from our conversation."

"Will you not, sire," said Hyde, passionately, after a moment's musing, "remember that those whose hands were dipped in the most innocent blood of that illustrious martyr—?"

"O now, I can't stand that old clap-trap; oddsfish, man, I can't stand that," said Charles, motioning. "Is a man's father of no use but to reproach his son with? Only the other day, at my last levee, that Bishop Fell had the impudence to tell me I swore more than became a good Christian; and didn't I say to him, 'Your martyr swore worse than that.'"

"The king of blessed memory," said Sir Robert, rather shocked at the levity with which the thoughtless monarch spoke of his royal father, "was not sparing of adjurations when he was directing a charge, or riding down the squadrons; for I remember, at Newbury, when we had to screw and jumble in a heap

over a low wall to get at some cursed musketeers that galled our flank, his Majesty, in my hearing, called out lustily, 'A pest on those fellows, they are shooting us down as if we were young crows!'

"That's nothing. Lord! in Noll's times," said Godolphin, "when the Parliament put fines on swearing, it is said to have cost that young Hector Bellasis a thousand a year for oaths alone. Lord! 'pest' counts for nothing."

"I'm afraid we're growing effeminate," said Charles, "in oaths. Look at Queen Bess, that the *Weekly Discovery* is always talking about; she swore by God's wounds, and such grand Popish oaths; but now our ladies lisp out, 'Upon my honour,' a foolish oath; and 'Upon my reputation,' a venial oath. To return to Rochester: what has made him turn a Wentworth all at once?"

"I wager he was scared by the Green Ribbons, or that the 'prentices hissed him the last time he went into the City," said Sunderland, sarcastically.

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“James is fonder of hunting than I am,” said Charles, discursively; “I prefer the paradise at Hampton Court, and chasing about my gardens after a rabbit with my spaniels. Odsfish, if gentlemen like you, Sir Robert, wouldn’t rather have hares than friends; why, you would forswear any king who dared to hunt on your land. Egad, though, if I have ever liked the sport since I was hunted so myself after Worcester. When we were last at Newmarket, James and I went out every day; and every day, at a certain place, we met an honest fellow of a butcher, who, from my speaking to him, had got in a habit of asking what sport we had. If we said we had a good run, he always said, ‘Did you kill?’ and if we said ‘No,’ he put his fingers to his nose, and jogged off. Odsfish, at last, if I didn’t get ashamed of looking that fellow in the face.”

“I was once riding with the Duke of York,” said Arlington, “near Windsor, when we were warned off an enclosure by a gentleman in a greasy buff coat. ‘Do you know who you

have, sir?' said his grace. 'Yes,' said our friend; 'I am speaking to a duke; but on my own property I am king.' His grace grew black, and was much troubled at this; and I think but for me would have sent back and have had the dogged fellow's nose slit."

"If I had been there," said Charles, "I should have merely laughed, and bowed, and said, 'Sir, you make me feel I am the greatest prince on earth; for while others rule over slaves, I rule over a race of kings.' He'd have been a Tory ever afterwards, bet you."

"I think Sir Robert beats all fox-hunters I ever met with," said Sunderland, "but old Matchem of Leicester, who rode twenty stone, and his huntsman eighteen; he got drunk every day to the toast of 'All the hunters in Christendom;' and once, after a hard day, when he went home with two brushes in his hat, he had the fox's head devilled for dinner."

"Ah, ah! and better, too, than half your foreign kickshaws," said Sir Robert, looking

hard out of the window to prevent his eye glancing at his Majesty's plate.

"Is that a good dog of yours?" said Charles, pointing to a fox-hound that was nuzzling his nose with his master's hand.

"Never a better, your Majesty, ever gave tongue. Stout, tender-nosed, and no babbler; stanch and true, swift and keen; one that has tasted fox, too, before this. With your Majesty's leave, I'll propose his health. 'Grappler's health, with three times three.'"

With demure faces, the company filled their glasses and drank the toast.

"Gentlemen," said the king, "I have now to propose a toast which I am sure will be drunk with enthusiasm: 'The Little Whig.'" Sir Robert, not seeing the allusion to Sunderland's beautiful wife, tossed off his glass with a look of inquiry.

"I never heard of that dog," said Sir Robert, "your Majesty; but there was Whigger, by Glider out of Blossom, well known in this part of England."

"It's a well-known toast in London," said his Majesty, "but not confined to sportsmen."

"Ah," said Sir Robert, "save your Majesty, I see them all abreast, carrying a lead, never coming to a fault, spreading like a sky-rocket, twenty-five couple all in a clump. Then push forward all of ye; scream, yelp, bark—such music! Halloo, forward! gone away! Tally-ho! he gets a head; they're gaining him!"

"Heigh, Baffler, Buxom, Bounder! So ho, Conqueror, Chimer, Crasher! Ho, Forester, Flasher, Jester!"

"Heigh, Traveller, Racer, Reveller!" said Godolphin, led away by the enthusiasm.

"Tally-ho, tally-ho! tear him to pieces!" said Sir Robert, throwing up his arms as if flinging the dead fox to a maddened pack, and then sinking quite relaxed into his chair, he ended a stammered apology to his Majesty.

"No words about it, Sir Robert. I love an honest sportsman, and I know Godolphin's taste of old. But isn't this much better than the field?—here's all the excitement and no fatigue."

And how long mayhap did that chase take?"

"Let me see," said Godolphin, smiling and looking at his watch, as he wiped off the heat-drops from his good-humoured forehead; "by this stop-watch, exactly one hour and twenty minutes. We went away with a dog-fox, stuck to him down Wetherby Hill, had a check at Guymassy Woods, tried back at Woollerton, were thrown out at Clanson Earths, and killed at last at Winnesly Bottom, after a twenty-mile run."

"The fox is a sagacious animal, and of much discernment," said Arlington inquiringly; "but still a very loathsome vermin, and not worth the catching."

"As to its smell, I prefer it to wig-powder, or ladies' sweet-washed gloves, on a clear morning," said Sir Robert. "As to sagacity, I should like to hear any one, saving his Majesty, match this story of mine. When I was with Lunsford's regiment, gentlemen, in Essex, in 1643, we went three days running to Crick-sell Wood, and always lost in the churchyard.

We were one day all at fault, stumbling about among the graves, when a celebrated bitch of mine, Fidget, leaped up several times at a buttress and gave tongue. Some thought nothing of this; but trusting to her stanchness—for she was my favourite—I leaped off my horse, and climbed up by some ivy to the low roof of the church, where we found a fox kennel sure enough. We then helped three or four couple of dogs up, and, zounds, they went in full cry on the chancel-roof in a moment; and there reynard died, without benefit of clergy, after a five-minutes' run."

"Extraordinary!" shouted all.

"I know another old fox," said Charles aside to Arlington, "who generally uses the Protestant Church as a place of refuge."

"I never heard of another," said Sir Robert, in high glee at the interest the royal party took in his sporting stories. "You know Sir Henry Woolett, at the Gable House at Chelmsford?"

"Yes, yes!" cried every one, to get the quicker to the story; "well?"

"I was hunting there once, when we ran the fox up into a tree; and, twenty feet up, we found a hole with four cubs. Egad," said Sir Robert, "I don't know if a kingdom is not easier to manage than a pack of fox-hounds; and some of our rules might, mayhap, be of use to your counsellor-gentlemen here. Hit your dog first, and rate him afterwards, for instance."

"Lauderdale does both," said Charles; "for he scolds a poor devil of a Covenantanter and then hangs him."

"Silent at going into cover, noisy at coming out, is the huntsman's business."

"As men who are quiet in office are noisy in opposition," said Godolphin.

Sir Robert looked rather puzzled at these allusions. Charles good-humouredly asked him, "What are the requisites of a good fox-hound?"

"Legs like arrows," said Sir Robert;

"wide breast, your Majesty, deep chest, broad, back, thin neck, small head, and thick tail."

"I remember some old distiches about a greyhound," said Godolphin :

' Head like a snake,
Neck like a drake,
Back like a bream,
Side like a beam,
Tail like a rat,
Foot like a cat. ' "

"True enough, true enough, sir," said Sir Robert, approvingly, looking round benignantly, and filling his glass "to the immortal memory."

"And what is the best sort of morning for your fox-hunting?" said Arlington, sedately.

"The scent lies, look you, when the wind's southerly or westerly; north and east are what I call Whiggish winds, good for nothing but to save foxes' brushes, weary the dogs, and send the huntsman home swearing like a trooper; a warm day without sun, a hot

close fog, when there's a white frost, or hard rain, and mild air, are good. But of all things in the world, there's nothing spoils an honest man's sport more than your cursed stinking violets. Drat me, if I don't hate the sight of them."

"Ah, ah!" said Charles, bursting into a laugh at this odd antipathy. "Why, you're like my old huntsman at Windsor, who goes about the park wishing all my sheep were foxes; and well he may, for I pay him 80*l.* a-year for nothing but hallooing."

"As well earned as a lawyer's money," said Sir Robert; "I wager a very honest fellow, and one I should like to crush a pot with."

"All I wonder is," said Arlington, "that a man ever hunts twice—running like a madman, after a bad smell, just to feed a set of dogs, who are the only creatures that really relish the sport."

"Out upon you!" said Godolphin. "Sir Robert's right. The finest moment in life is

when the first challenge is heard in the dark of the cover, 'Hark to Chirper! hark to Rattler!' as the best dog speaks in the thicket and owns the fox."

Charles now rose to go; but Sir Robert, who by this time had taken far too much claret, held the king's hand, and dragged him back to his seat, entreating him, with tears and many allusions to "the blessed memory," to finish the bottle.

With a good-humoured smile, the king released his coat from the good knight's grasp, and whispering, "A drunken man is as great as a king," sat down, and completed his task, much to the indignation of Essex, and the delight of the pliant Godolphin.

With a discharge of patareros from the roof of the clock-tower, the cavalcade at last set forth, the king riding at their head fully armed, to publicly express his apprehension at the armed followers of Shaftesbury.

"Honest old fellow," said the king, "as I

ever saw; full of old Cavalier stories that would delight Rupert, and as fond of fox-hunting as his servant is of gardening."

"What in the world took Rowley to that dreary old house?" whispered Churchill to Claverhouse.

"A pretty face, as usual," said Claverhouse; "and he talks of sending for her to court, so let Portsmouth tremble."

"Bah," said Churchill, "what fear from the red cheeks of a village Cicely? Take canary, and rinse your brain clear. A fiend when seen through a rainbow-cloud by lovers seems an angel."

"Yes," said Claverhouse—"there, don't shrug and bite your glove—but to the vulgar herd only an imperious, wanton Jezabel."

"What's that about Jezabel, gentlemen?" said the king, turning round. "Churchill hasn't turned Quaker, I hope, to win favour with the duke. As for Claverhouse, he never turns, except he turns colour when he's angry, and that's too often."

"Have you heard Tony's last trick, your Majesty?" said Godolphin, as the royal party rode on.

"Not I," said Charles, whistling a song of Dryden's.

"Why, he declares an agent of his in France has discovered in a convent at Paris *a little black box*, containing the deed of marriage of a gentleman named Stuart with a Welsh girl named Walters. It's now on its way over."

"*A little black box*," said Charles, laughing. "What next? And so Monmouth turns out James, and gives the empty box as a money chest to Shaftesbury, who will keep the Exchequer under his own key. *A little black box!*—ah, ah! Very good! *A little black box!* *Ancora.* Very well—very well, indeed."

ever so

would

hunting

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CHAPTER V.

house

court

THE PRODIGAL SON.

“

the must now return to Mr. Wilson, and
~~can~~ the manner of his flight from his old
~~was~~ at Crow's Nest.

The sounds of Sir Robert's horse's hoofs
~~had~~ scarcely died away ere he had betaken
 himself to his room, tied up a worn serge
 coat and a few other necessaries in a bundle,
 with a Bible and a volume of Baxter, closed
 his volumes with a sigh, shut his window for
 fear of rain, arranged some dried flowers on
 a shelf with as much care as if he had been
 going to spend his life in studying them; and
 then, with a parting glance at the old com-

panions of his solitary hours of study, descended the stairs, much to the astonishment of Mabel's maid, who saw that he was dressed in a Norwich drugget coat, as if for a journey. He paced once down the avenue, visited the garden, listened a moment to the fountain, watched the restless birds, so careless of his sorrow; and then, passing through a back wicket, entered the fields, and struck into a path that led to London.

His friend the curate passed him on the other side of a hedge, but he had not the heart to accost him. A farmer's boy ran up to greet him, but Mr. Wilson passed on as if in a hurry, and the boy ceased to follow him. His eyes filled with tears as he took a last look at Crow's Nest; and then, descending a hill, he lost sight of it, as he believed, for ever.

At the first stile, when well beyond reach of being met by any who knew him, Wilson drew a letter from his pocket, and, with tears in his eyes, read it aloud. One could see by the worn folds of the letter, how often it had

been perused, and the paper was stiff and blistered, as if with tears.

“DEAR DAD” (ran the letter)—“I am now in Newgate, taken by a beggarly mercer, on whom I drew my pops a week ago, somewhere between Acton and Uxbridge. As I have no doubt I shall die in the air, I should like to see you before I dance my last caper on earth. The chaplain preaches to me from the prattling box to-morrow, just as he did to the great Jack Hind. I send you three pistoles to help you on the way.

“Your true gamecock son,

“TOM CHAMBERS,

“*Alias* THE FLYING DUTCHMAN.”

“O Heaven!” cried the old man, tearing the letter into a thousand pieces, and falling on his knees with passionate vehemence, “how dost thou visit our youthful sins upon our hoary heads! Truly does Scripture say, ‘He that sows the wind reaps the whirlwind.’ But for your sin this had not been. Trem-

bling on the edge of eternity, yet no repentance, no fear—and he none of the elect! But why sit here? I may be too late—Saturday—Sunday—Monday.” And as he spoke, he arose and walked with a haste almost beyond his strength. He had not proceeded more than five miles, and was now just at the junction of two roads, when he espied a man, dressed as a pedlar and carrying a pack, conning with great attention a printed notice headed “50*l.* Reward,” pasted up against a tall gibbet-like finger post, whose three arms pointed confusingly in three different directions. As he approached, and put on an enormous pair of spectacles to read the name upon the post, the pedlar turned his back, stared him in the face, and then running up, shook him by the hand.

“My son!” said the old minister, and fell upon his neck. “God be thanked, you are then free!”

“Free?—yes, thanks to a good file and a quick wit.”

"Thank the God who freed Peter from his chains."

"Only to think of this!" said the highwayman, with a gay laugh—"but then the Lord's anointed, like you and me, dad, are specially favoured."

"Oh, my son! do not talk so wildly and impiously; but, ere it is too late, prepare for eternity. Do you never think of eternity?"

"Not I—not I. I'm like the fellow in the play—as for the other world, I sleep out the thought of it. This world takes up all my time, and would I had twice as much of it."

"How have you lived for the ten years that I have lost you?" said the father, with a tenderness he could not conceal.

"Well: shifted—shifted pretty well. You remember, as a lad I was always hanging about the playhouses; and when they called out and asked who would be a devil, and see the play for nothing, in goes I, and earns a

shilling. Then I went as a Jack Pudding."

"What abomination is that?" said the father—"what mystery of iniquity?"

"Clown to a mountebank, for I can't help my bits of pedlar French. Well, I made the jokes and he made the money; but I got tired at last of spitting fire out of a walnut-shell, and swallowing ribbons; so I turned pedlar, and sold washballs, toothpicks, and tooth-powder, which I swore came from Japan, in the fiery deserts of Tartary. When I had stocked half Hertfordshire with brick-dust and powdered charcoal, I then set up as travelling doctor—Signor Anabaldo Ferabosco, just arrived from Ducatoon, on the Malabar coast."

"Father of lies," said Wilson, interrupting him, "these were thy promptings!"

"Well, at the great Aylesbury fair I put up a placard, denouncing all cheats, whether physical, chemical, or polemical; challenging any chirurgeon within thirty miles to answer my questions in the sciences of astrology,

palmy, physiognomy, mathematics, government, therapeutics, and everything except hydraulics, which I was not at present prosecuting. My pills I swore——”

“‘Swear not at all,’ say the Scriptures,” said Wilson, sighing.

“That, by various secrets discovered in fifteen years’ travel in Abyssinia and the Roman Empire, I had learnt by an easy *Aqua Parabolum*, without destroying complexions, as paints and daubings do, to free skins from all spots, freckles, heat pimples, and scars; to cleanse and preserve the teeth white as pearls, to turn the gums to coral, and make all maidens’ lips soft and kissable. Egad, it makes me laugh now to think how this brought the country girls in shoals to my booth.”

“They were like the silly women that Paul mentioned.”

“Ah, but my great hit was the cure of what I called *Tabes Britannica*, or the grand English disease peculiar to our country

—the scurvy. I treated this, not with any of your Mercuries, or antimony, or spirits, or salts, or such poisons, but the real Mirabolana, gathered on the hill-country of the Peruvian mountains:—it was really powdered rhubarb. Egad, as the play says, ‘Every church, every sermon, finds a careful man work;’ they filled my purse, and I picked their pockets. From a Jew friend I learnt, too, how to cheat alchemists—by putting gold dust into a hollow stick, and offering to stir their mixtures. I then began to turn up the best cards at primero, till one day a gull, whom I had picked cleaner than usual, foolishly ran upon my sword, and was ‘pinked,’ as Romeo calls it.”

“His blood is on your hands,” said Wilson. “‘Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed.’”

“Well, there’s one thing,” said the reprobate; “I’ve got as many silver cups, posset dishes, silver-hilted swords, and watches, on my mind, as even Claude du Val himself, ay, or

Jack Hind either ; but I never would—no, not though I had to sleep for a week at the glass-houses, when I'd no horse to take the road with—I never would kidnap. That seems to me a game only fit for devils, and I'd have no hand in it. But, Lord ! I have invented wig-snatching, with a boy in a covered basket carried on a man's head ; and I'd do anything else—whether it is stiver, ducat, pistole, or crown, it's all one to Tom Chambers.”

“And you have been hunted like a partridge on the mountains,” said Wilson, “and have not yet learned to repent.”

“Hunted !” said the highwayman ; “but what use hunting an old mountebank ? Look here.” Then, turning his face for a moment, he appeared with a grey wig, grey moustache, and grey beard ; in a moment after he had red hair, and one eye tied up. “Why, I could get off on my very way up the dreary hill to Tyburn ; ay, and dance a sara-band with the hangman first. I'll take you

five shillings—make it crowns—but, bah—I forget, you're of a different sect. Why, once at Leicester, when I was in limbo, I got a painter to paint me over with plague spots, and I was put in a coffin bored with holes, carried out, and given to my friends. What do you think of that? 'Where be now your quips and your quilllets? What, quite chapfallen!' as the play says—for I was an actor once in a small way."

"Did you never feel, then, the sting of the worm that never dies?" cried Wilson, flinging his thin arms to heaven. "Good Lord, send the dew of Thy mercy upon this stony heart."

"Now, don't talk in that way—it gives me the shivers; and I've no huff-cap here to drink myself steady again. I would not for a purseful of gold pieces that my bullies should know I was the son of a canting old Calvinist. Why, I should be bobbed to death about it, I should never hear the last of their crambo rhymes. But there, the candles will

go out some day, and we shall be left darkling; so, 'tis

'A bonny lad came to the court,
His name was Daniel Cooper,
And he petitioned to the king
That he might be a trooper.'

But now I must bring you to our rendezvous, where I shall give thee money to take thee to London. Not a word about father and son; trust to me to get you off at a dead lift. Mind, you're John Wilson, travelling in aid of the Protestant cause."

"I can tell no lies though I lose my life. 'No liar,' God's word says, 'shall enter the kingdom of heaven.'"

"Then all I can say is, the good will have plenty of elbow room," said Chambers; "so keep your prayers for the Tyburn tree, where we may meet some day."

In a few minutes' walk the old tutor had narrated to his reckless son the cause that had led him to leave Crow's Nest.

"Old gentleman, I see it in a jiffy. You hear your young Absolom's going to dance

on a tight rope; you are not proud of the connection, and, in fact, rather ashamed of it; therefore packed up that old church Bible and a bundle of worm medicines, to tramp off to Newgate. Having now found him, safe and sound, you will tramp back again, tell the butler you've been out botanizing and lost your way, order a posset, and go to bed."

"No, my son; I return no more to the house of the persecutor. God has gifted me with some knowledge of the Greek tongue and of the Italian hand, and I propose to teach in families of quality."

"It won't do," said the pedlar, biting his nails in perplexity. "But stop—I have it. In the odd scenes roguery has brought me into, I have once or twice lately had some small dealings with this Lord Shaftesbury all London's talking of now. I will to him, remind him of certain passages of my life, and present you to him as a secretary."

"He's a good Protestant, John, and has

smitten the scarlet woman many a time on the cheek bone. I approve of thy plan, and will fare with thee."

"They tell me—at least Nimming Tom does, who frequents the coffee-houses and reads the *Intelligencer*—that he has got hold of a certain *little black box*, with a deed in it which proves Monmouth legitimate, and sends James to the cold side of the throne. He threatens to produce it at the Oxford Parliament, and all the clubs are agog about it."

"Pray God," said the father, "that he be kept safe from Jesuit knives."

"Trust an old fox," said the pedlar-highwayman. "He's the lad to make the court shake in its shoes, and raise Oates to prime-minister."

"This little box then may be indeed," said the father, "a second Noah's ark for deluged England."

CHAPTER VI.

THE MOHAWKS AT SEA.

It was a bright, fresh June morning, and the good schooner *Saucy Jane* was ploughing fast and freely through the boiling gold of a summer morning's sea. If there were no larks above it racing each other to the nearest cloud, there were snow-winged gulls, like drifts of foam driven skyward by the waves. If there was no bird-music in the boughs, for the simple reason that there were no boughs, the fresh breeze—"just a catskin" the sailors of that day called it—made a pleasant whistle in the rigging, and the crimson pennon struggled out fitfully from

the schooner's mizen-peak as if it was some gay tropical bird tied by a chain.

But this is on deck, and our business is below with the *Saucy Jane's* only passenger, Sir Roger Wildfire, a gentleman of rank and fortune, on secret service at present, and now in the Channel, half way between France and England. He has been up an hour already, and has been employing his time in several ways. First, in looking through the great cabin window, and watching the chalk cliffs of Dover rising against the blue horizon like the silver walls of some enchanted city. Secondly, in looking out and listening to the splash and rush of the water, as long lines of foam fall back into the ship's wake. Thirdly, in fumbling the last French song he had heard at court upon a battered and worm-eaten guitar, which he had found in a locker buried under a pile of dusty charts and torn books of signals. As the music he extracted was not Orphean, and it was evident the instrument was not strung "with bright

"Apollo's hair," Sir Roger had just flung it with a curse into a corner, and was now sipping, with many yawns and a rather qualmish face—for the night had been rough—a cup of chocolate. He opens a valise; he has now extracted with much care a parcel, which, when unpapered, proves to be a small square casket, covered with black velvet, and studded with a gold border of ornaments resembling the letter S. Lifting the lid, he has drawn out a legal-looking paper, from which hung several seals, and attentively perused it, stopping between every line as if weighing each word. Absorbed in this, he did not mark the sound of an approaching boat; and if he heard a speaking-trumpet hailing the *Saucy Jane*, he probably, with the ignorance of a landsman, supposed it to be the captain giving some important order. The boom of a cannon just over his head, a clamour of shouts, and the sounds of trampling feet, attracting at last his attention;

he put his hand to a small bell to summon the captain.

At that moment the captain pushed open the door, and hastily entered. He was without his hat, his falling band was torn, and stained by several drops of blood; but Wildfire did not observe any wound, though he saw he held his right hand tightly to his left arm.

"Pirates!" was the only word he uttered, speaking faintly with a moan.

"Adzooks!" cried Wildfire, alarmed, but still fashionably cool. "Captain, oblige me then by handing me my peruke from that peg over your head. Thankee. By this light, I must hide. I wouldn't for a thousand jacks have these despatches taken. You Jew of Malta, don't turn chicken, but stow me (I think that's the word) in your biscuit-locker."

"That's the first place the villains rummage."

"In the powder-magazine then: they'll never look there; and I can amuse myself with a pipe of Trinidado till they're gone."

“Why, you’d be blown up, Sir Roger, before I could count six.”

“Egad, so I would; I never thought of that. Well, anywhere; and if they ask for me (but they won’t ask for me), say I’m dying in my hammock of the plague—call it the Black Death; it’ll frighten ’em; or—”

“Lor’ love ye, Sir Roger, avast with all that; these fellows will search the very ballast before they go; and curse me, for all I know, perhaps shave us both without a razor.”

“The Mahommedans!” said Wildfire, carefully cramming the paper into the box, and locking it. Then, unscrewing the round knob of his sword-hilt, he thrust the small silver key into the handle of his rapier, which seemed made tubular for such purposes. After this, with the utmost coolness, he drew a letter from a secret pocket in his broad richly-laced sword-belt, and slipped it under his voluminous wig, re-adjusting the peruke with much care in a cabin-glass.

While he was still doing this, the noise of

some one with a wooden leg stumping down the cabin-stairs was heard ; and the next moment a truculent red-faced fellow, with a patch of black taffeta over one eye, and with a wooden leg, swaggered into the cabin, stroking a huge pair of red moustachoes that curled up to his pig-like eyes, that seemed literally choked by the multitude of wrinkles with which years of villany and cunning had pleated his face. He held a broad sabre in one hand ; while from a belt, fastened with a huge bunch of blue ribbons, hung four pairs of pistols. He hardly gave the captain or Wildfire a look ; but slashing a piece of wood about a foot long off the table with a blow of his sword, seated himself across one of the great guns, and fired off a pistol as a signal for help.

In a moment two bearded sailors, brown and swarthy, and wearing voluminous white shirts and wide Panama hats, flung themselves into the cabin.

“ What’s this footy little wash-tub loaded with ? ”

"She carries a cargo of claret, as a present from Louis the Great (so the ship's papers call him) to the King of England."

"I'll save him, then, one debauch at least. Bring some punch for me and these gentlemen; and harkee, Jack Bolton, if I hear you again calling that d—d Mounseer Louis the Great, ship's papers or no ship's papers, I'll cleave you to the brisket; and you know what old Timbertoe's word is; so do the Spaniards, d—'em, and the Indians too, for like of that."

And as he said this, the rough-fingered villain looked down his sword, and observing a wet patch of blood half-way down the blade, deliberately wiped it on Wildfire's wig.

Wildfire's coolness at this forsook him. He leapt on his feet, and, drawing his sword, was about to run the insolent ruffian through the body, when he felt his arm seized, and looking behind, observed that four sailors stood at his back, and two behind his friend the captain of the *Saucy Jane*.

"Now, lookee here," said the pirate, grin-

ning and showing his teeth; "I forgive-ee this 'ere time, because you are what we may call a lubber, and unused to our ways; but by G— if you touch your fox again, I'll whip off both your hands at the wrist, and you know what old Timbertoe's word is."

Then, taking a tremendous draught at the smoking punch-bowl that had now been brought in, he bade Wildfire and the captain both drink; for care killed a cat, and it was the fortune of war, reminding them that they were fortunate in falling into gentlemen's hands—gentlemen who knew what breeding was, too, and who were judges of claret.

Then, observing that these trite maxims of piratical philosophy neither abated the white heat of Wildfire's rage, nor the despair of the captain, he cursed them both for a set of downhearted fools, and finished the bowl himself.

At a shout of the commodore, "Bring 'em up!" the "gentleman of fortune,"—as he called himself, pirate being a vulgar

word—stumped up-stairs, desiring his men to bring the prisoners, and firing off a pistol to announce that he was coming.

An extraordinary scene met Wildfire's eye when he ascended upon deck. On the quarter-deck stood the pirate-commander—a short burly man, of proud bearing, who spoke with a Welsh accent. His eyes were large and fierce; his mouth thick and sensual, turned up at the corners with a mixture of ferocity and cunning. His thick roll of double-chin was half hid by a thick lace cravat that fell in ample folds over a splendid Spanish dress of crimson brocade. His hose were of crimson velvet, and his shoes were tied with crimson ribbon. In his hat was a feather, also of crimson. He wore no wig, but his own dark brown hair, thick and coarse, fell upon his shoulders. Round his neck hung a gold chain of great size, with a diamond cross at one end, and he held a drawn sabre in one hand, and courteously beckoned Wildfire to advance. The sailors of the

Saucy Jane lay bound in heaps on the deck, watching the game with true sailors' indifference; for curiosity had already got the better of fear. Even in his anxiety, Wildfire could not help smiling to see his valet, *Mille-fleur*, pale and shaking, in the hands of a dozen blacks, some of whom held pikes in their hands, and others muskets. The majority of the pirate sailors were, however, busy tapping a pile of claret casks and ladling out the liquor with cans and cups. A few, more richly dressed, were lying on rolls of the finest linen, evidently the produce of some recent plunder; and two others were "nicking" some brandy-bottles by knocking off the necks with the blow of a cutlass, a process that broke about one in three. All the pirates, Wildfire observed, were brown as gipsies, and seemed tanned by tropical sun.

The commodore, employed in reading the ship's papers, did not for a moment or two address a word to the prisoners, or even lift

his eyes to look at them. A select guard—consisting of the boatswain, conspicuous by his silver whistle; the gunner, holding a roll of lighted match still in his hand; and the quartermaster, the leader of the boarders—were peering over the commander's shoulder with looks of admiration at the learning with which "he spelled out the conjuring books." The gunner broke the silence by coming up, with much apparent friendliness, and asking Wildfire "What it was o'clock?" With a low bow, that gentleman presented him with a large gold watch set with diamonds, hoping he would keep it "as a small memento of their meeting." The brutal wretch replied, "It'll make a cursed good football;" and throwing it on the deck, skimmed it with his foot into the sea.

At the roar of laughter from the sailors who witnessed this achievement, the commodore looked sternly up, and his eye falling at once with a pounce upon the offender, he drew a pistol from his belt and fired, and the

gunner fell bleeding on the deck, shot through the shoulder. A murmur of disapprobation ran round amongst the crew.

"He broke our third article, which is, 'Never to insult prisoners when quarter has once been given,'" said the commodore. "I've broken his shoulder; and I'd have done the same, by the pody of St. Tafid! if he had been one of the best lords in the ship."

The commodore, Morgan, was an old buccaneer, known to be pistol-proof; and the murmurers grew silent as he coolly loaded his pistol again, as if instinctively, and slipped it into his embroidered belt.

"Sir Roger Wildfire," said the pirate, turning to the prisoners, having first taken up the gunner's lighted match, that lay smoking at his feet, then setting fire to a pile of papers, and bowing till his red feather swept the deck, "your servant; Captain Henderson, your slave. You, I believe," turning to Wildfire's companion, "are cap-

tain of the schooner *Saucy Jane*, and formerly lieutenant in Monk's Cold-streams."

"I am," said Henderson, bowing, and watching with a rueful side-glance the fire smouldering through his ship's papers.

"Never mind those musty papers. Carajo, you seem as fond of them as if they were your first love-letters. You shall have half a dozen ship's papers, if that's any use. And you," turning to Wildfire, and offering him a pinch from a rich gold snuff-box, the lid of which sparkled with diamonds, "Sir Roger Wildfire, of Flamington, in the county of Cheshire. My name's Morgan—Captain Henry Morgan. I was born not thirty miles from Caernarvon. But that's neither here nor there. You are, I believe, the bearer of a present from the French king to Charles of Whitehall. Believing it unpatriotic in his gracious Majesty to turn his back on honest Eng-

lish ale, and to poison himself with sour French vinegar, I shall, therefore, with the approval of these gentlemen, confiscate the whole of the cargo."

A buzz of approval rang round at the truly English sentiment, no one appearing alive to the want of morality that was its inherent defect.

"From the confession of Millefleur, your valet, who appears to have hardly yet got his sea-legs, or even to know an anchor from a marline-spike, it appears that you are bearer of secret and very important despatches, and a small black box, to one Shaftesbury, the president of some secret club—the Calves'-Head Club, in Crane Court, Chancery Lane."

"It was all false, admiral," cried Millefleur, struggling with the negroes who held him, and holding a pouncet-box affectedly to his nose, to destroy the odour of the African men and brothers. "It was all false and produced by fear; they would have something."

Millefleur's fear of his master, it should be observed, had now overcome his fear for the pirate, particularly as Sir Roger, much to the admiration of the sailors, was carelessly combing his wig, just as he would have done in the Ring at the Park, or in Fop's Corner at the Duke's Theatre; and one glance of his eye, implying reduction of wages and loss of many perquisites, had been too much for Millefleur's feeble nature.

"Here is conflicting evidence," said the commodore. "We must try what a sweating will do; this foppettee seems as if he needed exercise."

"A ring, there, a ring!" cried the pirates, some running to the arms-chest, and others to the cabin to get candles, more from habit than use; for this punishment was generally practised at night, and after a debauch.

Wildfire, who had heard of a pirate's "sweating," determined, as a warning for his cowardly valet, to allow it at least to begin.

In five minutes twenty sailors, armed with knives, forks, compasses, tucks and pikes, had formed a ring round the mainmast, and lighted candles had been stuck in the deck, within the ring, at intervals of about a foot. The musicians were then called; and to the lively dance-tune of "Bobbing Joan," Millefleur, half dead with fright, was dragged, shrieking and clinging to everything he passed, till he had entered the dreadful circle. In vain he implored for mercy, and looked all round for help. His master folded his arms and looked on with a frown; while the admiral rubbed his hands, as pleased as a butcher at a bull-bait; his wide greasy countenance wore a smile of perfect philanthropy.

"It was all true—it was all true!" cried Millefleur, indifferent to his master's frowns; "by the brightness of heaven, it was all true, gentlemen!"

The blacks chuckled with delight, and pushed out their pikes, as if already in anticipation probing a human body.

The sailors shouted staves of Spanish and Cavalier songs, and scraps of plays.

“ May I live till I see
Old Noll on a tree,
And many such as he ! ”

roared one ; while a second, with an affected whine of devotion, screamed,

“ When we sat down by Babylon,
And on the willows hung
Our harps, why then the pagans vile
Had wished us to have sung.”

“ Caramba ! ” cried a third ; “ this is better fun even than singeing the old Spaniard at Maracaibo, when we burnt his gray beard off, and gave him the strappado four times running, till he showed us where he hid his pieces of eight.”

“ Ay, ay, Jack,” said his companion, roaring with delight at the amiable reminiscence ; “ or when we taught the fat friar how to swim on shore with two-hundredweight tied to his paunch.”

“ The musicians are waiting for your honour to give the signal to strike up ; the

decks are cleared, and the dancers ready."

Morgan waited a moment, as if tasting a pleasure in the delay; and then with a stentorian voice, as if he was straining to be heard above the roar of guns, called out, "Scrapers, strike up!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE RING.

THE moment the fiddlers drew their bows across their instruments, the sailor that stood nearest to Millefleur gave him a gentle prick with the sharp point of a boarding-pike. With a shriek of rage and terror, Millefleur bounded forward, his thin legs flying with supernatural swiftness round the ring, his protruding eyes vainly searching for an aperture, and resting only on laughing and pitiless faces. A rabbit in a net, a rat in a trap, a badger when he is driven into the baiting-pit, are faint types of Millefleur's anxiety and vacant horror. Now a poke with a pair

of compasses sent him flying to the right ; now a thrust of a bayonet, that never touched him, sent him racing to the left. Already his hat had fallen off, his coat flown open, his pouncet-box dropped, his band was torn off, and his silk stockings were slipped about his heels. A more pitiable object of vexation and despair and cowardice never drew laughter from a band of Indians.

“Cannibals !” he screamed, “for the love of Mary, let me go !”

“He’s a Papist ! make him dance a quicker step,” said the psalm-singer.

But at that moment, when the hedge of porcupine-quills, as one fellow called them, was bristling more terrible than ever, Millefleur, overcome by terror, fell in a swoon at the foot of the mast.

A Cavalier sailor, thinking the swoon a sham, was about to wake him up with a touch, from a pair of compasses, when Morgan, in whose ear Wildfire had been for some time whispering, cried “Stop !” with a voice of

thunder. But the men were not willing to be so easily balked of their prey, and began to form again in a ring.

"I swear by all that's good and bad, if you don't stop," cried Morgan, "as sure as I burnt Panama, I'll send some of you to your own place!"

At this threat the men fell slowly and reluctantly into groups, and lowered the points of their various weapons; while the gunner, who had been leaning upon one arm shouting approval, fell back exhausted, and cried for a surgeon, "for the bullet was burning his blood up." Whilst three or four sailors were lowering the wounded man into a boat to take him into the pirate-vessel, *The Englishman's Revenge*, that, with black flag displayed, was lying alongside, the pirate-cook, a greasy fellow, who was also the surgeon, threw a bucketful of claret over Millefleur to recover him. With a silly stare, he began at last to move, and his pale lips articulated, "Coming, sir."

Before the laugh that this excited had died away, and just as the valet was sitting up and staring at the laughing faces round him with the air of a man awakened from an unpleasant dream, the boatswain, who, to judge from his only having one ear, had probably, at some time or other, suffered for his country's good at a London pillory, picked the sufferer's pocket of a gilt box, which proved to contain the scented powder with which the valet daily perfumed his master's wig. In a moment a dozen horny fingers were plunged into it, supposing it to be some peculiar sort of snuff. The valet had just strength enough left to feebly inform them of their mistake, and to beg them to remember that Sir Roger was nearly out of Marischal Powder, and that there was no more to be got nearer than Paris.

"Dear gentlemen, we shan't have enough for our wig for three days."

To this plaintive entreaty the quartermaster replied by throwing a handful of the powder into Millefleur's eyes, and, under cover of the

cloud, whipping out a watch and three ducatoons from his side-pocket—a well-known pickpocket's trick, that was received with great applause.

The wooden-legged fellow, to express his sympathy with the blinded and spluttering sufferer, now ordered another bowl of punch; and shouting out as a toast, "Success to trade!" meaning robbery in general, invited Millefleur to drink, borrowing Morgan's gold cross to stir up the fragrant beverage.

With an expression of great disgust, Millefleur, who was a Roman Catholic, pushed the bowl from him.

At this act of mutiny, the quartermaster, who had been shouting out,

"It blew so hard, d'ye see,
If you'll credit Ben and me,
It blew away the wig of the gallant commo—dore,"

stopped in the middle of the last word, and drawing out a pistol, pointed to the bowl, shouting, "That or this! Tom Rogers is steel to the backbone, and allows no man to flinch from his cup."

With a rueful face Millefleur seized the bowl and gulped down a spoonful, upon which the Ganymede who bore the nectar gave the bowl a heel forward that sent the valet backwards, the punch pouring over his face, and the bowl covering him up like an extinguisher.

"Him in the common box, massa cap'n," said a negro gunner's-mate, deliberately stripping another sailor of a richly-laced French suit that he had taken from Wildfire's valise: "Him all fair and 'bove board here."

"Leave him alone; we don't sell such rigging as that at the mast. Take this, you white lily; I don't want your ticker as long as I've got the sun and the stars." And so saying, the quartermaster flung the black Millefleur's watch. The black failing to catch it, it struck a spar, and the glass breaking, it fell on the deck.

The black, fingering his pockets to see after a place big enough for such a rich prize, picked it up with as much caution as

if it was a snake, and, with an extraordinary grimace, put it to his ear. In a moment he threw it down on the deck with a tremendous smash, as he might have done a scorpion.

“Why, what’s the matter, Jupiter?”

“Yah! him stone-dead.”

The watch had stopped. At this singular mistake—for the black had always supposed a watch to be either a living thing, or a powerful fetish shut up in a gold case—the sailors burst out laughing; but one of them, who had perhaps been a watchmaker, picked it up, and opening the works, touched the wheels, and setting them again in motion, held it to the Ashantee man’s ear. The black instantly fell down, and with clasped hands and prayers, mixed with wild gesticulations, prayed the great sleeping fetish to spare his life.

At this moment Morgan came forward, and ordering a boy to beat a signal on the drum, and the trumpeters to sound, re-

requested silence with the usual amount of noise with which such requests are generally accompanied.

"Gentlemen of fortune," said Wildfire, stepping forward, "bear me witness, that I will rather be cut into pound pieces than betray my trust. You, captain, have got his Majesty's wine and my ducatoons. To my clothes the sailors are welcome; but what good can a small black box be to a crew of pi—I mean, adventurers—gallant adventurers?"

"It's all one," said Morgan, his face purpling with rage. "Quartermaster, bring up that prisoner there, and try the 'question.'"

In a moment Millefleur was dragged up by two brawny sailors, while two others twisted a looped cord round the butts of two pistols, and slipped the noose over his head. In another instant the torture would have begun, when Sir Roger, stepping forward, drew the box from a secret pocket, and handed it to Morgan.

"It's locked," said Morgan, with a sneer; "and of course you've lost the key; but I carry a master-key ready for such emergencies." He drew out a pistol, and then bidding a sailor hold out the box at forty paces, blew open the lid as cleanly as if it had been done by a smith. He drew out the deed, and read with much interest the first two lines, then carefully rolled it up, and put it into his side-pocket. "A thing of no consequence," he said, smiling; "but we sometimes want parchment, and we can scrub out this writing. It's twenty years since I saw the foggy old city," he continued, turning to Wildfire, who stood silent and thoughtful, as if meditating some desperate enterprise, "and I scarcely know how things go on now."

"Why, bless my heart," chimed in the quartermaster, "didn't you overhaul that paper?"

"Tom Rogers, you clap a stopper on your jaw, or *cospetto* I'll shoot you like a dog,"

said Morgan, griping his pistol with a scowl of rage at the interruption. "When I left England," he continued, "old Noll ruled the roast, and everything was as cheerful as Porto Bello in a sickly season. The church bells rang from morning to night for prayers and exercises, and the old Cavaliers daren't put their noses out of the tavern doors—besides, half of them were in prison; there was nothing heard but 'My Lord Protector this,' and 'My Lord Protector that;' and there was always some fresh raw head to stare at on Temple Bar or London Bridge. It was the fashion then to turn up the whites of your eyes when you called for a bottle of sack, and to say grace an hour long after a stale herring; to talk through your nose, and read scraps of the *Crumbs of Comfort*, and *Salve for a Wounded Conscience*, to the gentlemen at the ordinary-dinner. Then at night, whisperings and pale faces, set teeth and bits of bread in the Alicant, with toasts of, 'God send this crumb well down,'

‘The king shall enjoy his own again,’ and ‘Stone walls do not a prison make,’ sung under breath and with faint voices. Curse the time ! The very thought of it makes me sick. Zounds, a week of it cured me ; so away I made to Wapping, and shipped in the *Spanish Bounty* for the golden Indies.”

“ It’s as good as a play to hear the admiral talk,” said one sailor to another.

“ As for plots, egad, it’s much the same now,” said Wildfire, resuming his usual coolness.

“ So I’m told,” said Morgan, winking with one eye, and putting his tongue in his cheek as a signal for the sailors to laugh, which of course they did, although they did not see the joke.

“ The succession is now the great subject of discussion at the coffee-houses,” said Wildfire. “ The True Blues are for Papacy and the Duke of York, the Whigs for the Duke of Monmouth. The Green-Ribbon Club and

the King's-Head Club are in battle array. Nothing else is talked about. The papers foam at the mouth, the pulpits ring with cries of Whig and Tory. The City, almost to a man, are for my Lord Shaftesbury, who rules them by a word."

"And his Majesty?" said Morgan — for Millefleur had told him all this before.

"Divides his gracious time between his dogs, his horses, and his mistresses. Whitehall, the ducks in St. James's Park, and the game of mall, occupy his spare moments; in a secondary degree, the present state of France and Spain."

"Gentlemen," said Morgan, turning to his crew, "I think we may now dismiss this gallant Whig gentleman, and proceed you know where; for time runs on, and we ought to sight the Lizard before——"

"Dead men tell no tales," said the quartermaster, looking to the priming of his pistol; "and I say its clean against our tenth article to let a prisoner go when

near an enemy's port. D——, if we are trapped, if I don't lay it to the Commodore's womanish mercy."

"Listen to him!" cried a handful of mutineers.

"Harkee, Tom Rogers," said Morgan. "I'm captain, and I'll be obeyed, or I'll know the reason why. You've got to lead the boarders, and see that the men stick to their guns, there your work ends. I say these gentlemen shall go free; and, *diavolo*, I'll shoot the first man down who lays a hand on them!"

"The admiral's right—hear the admiral!" shouted the fickle crew, preparing to carry off their plunder, and hustling the quartermaster, who now slunk away, cursing in a low voice, and darting poisonous glances at the prisoners.

"Sir Roger Wildfire, I wish you a very good morning, a fair wind, and good weather. My compliments to Lord Shaftesbury and his Majesty. Captain Henderson, save you.

Trumpeters, sound up!" And with these words the pirate-admiral strode off to his boat, followed by all his crew in military order, the Ashantee man only staying behind to beg Millefleur to take back his fetish, for it was too powerful for him.

The next moment a thunder of cannon sounded in salute, and the vessels parted company.

END OF VOL. II.



